

AJATASHATRU

Ajatashatru is ridden with guilt. What does a king do when, in a moment of misguided ambition, he orders the death of his own father? Ajatashatru wages war on his neighbours with brilliant new machines, expands his realm to make it a powerful empire and founds the new capital city of Pataliputra (modern Patna). But try as he might, he cannot shed his feelings of remorse and sorrow, until Gautama Buddha shows him the way...

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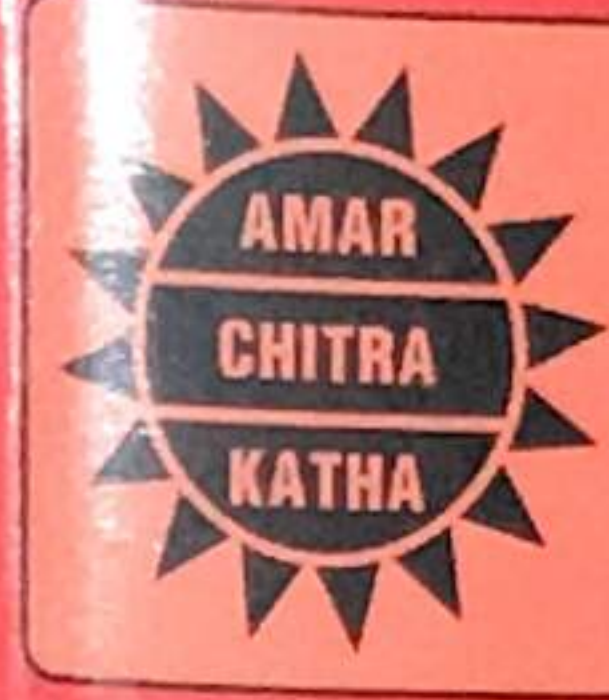
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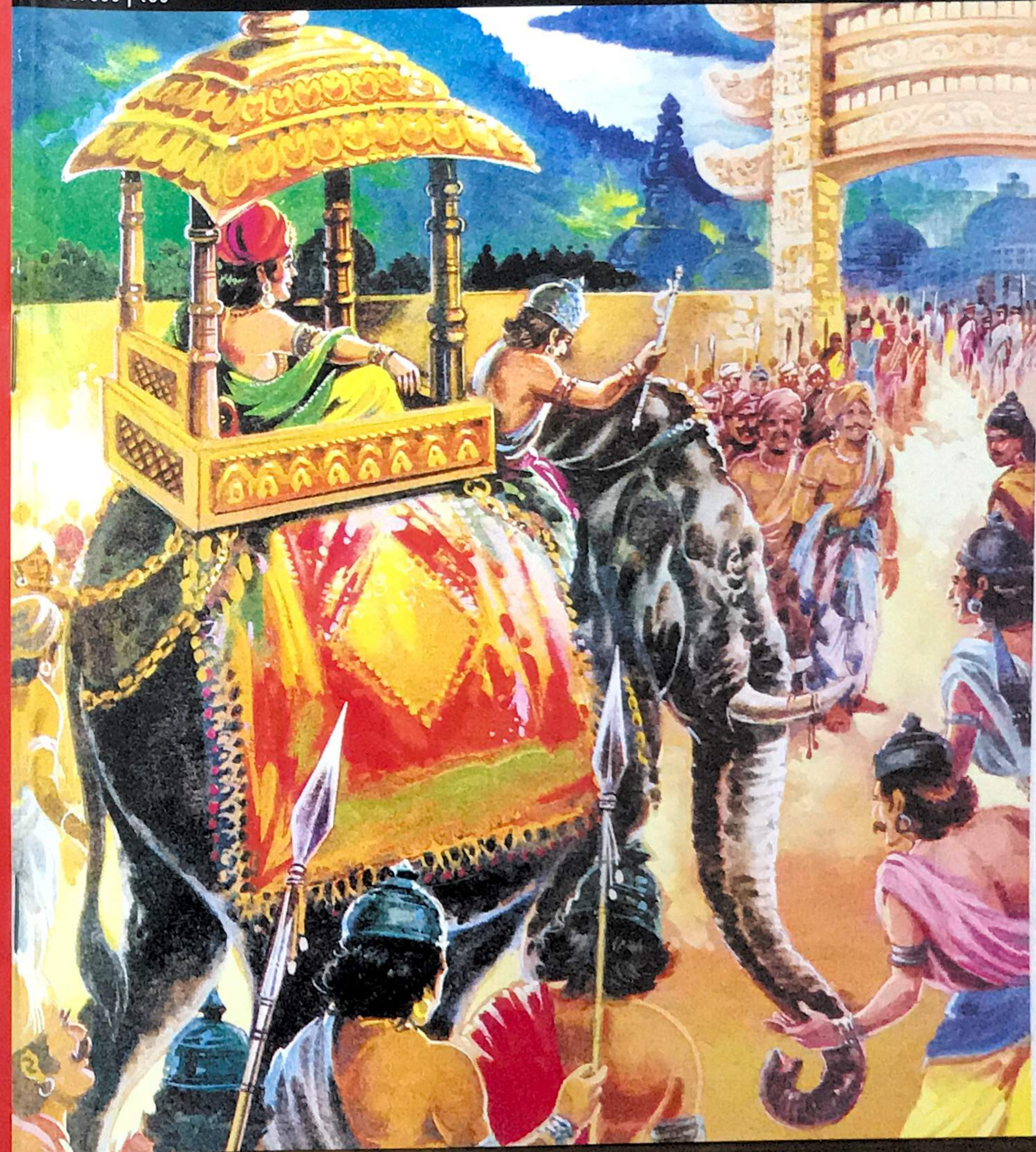
BRAVEHEARTS



AJATASHATRU

A SON'S STORY OF SORROW AND SUCCESS

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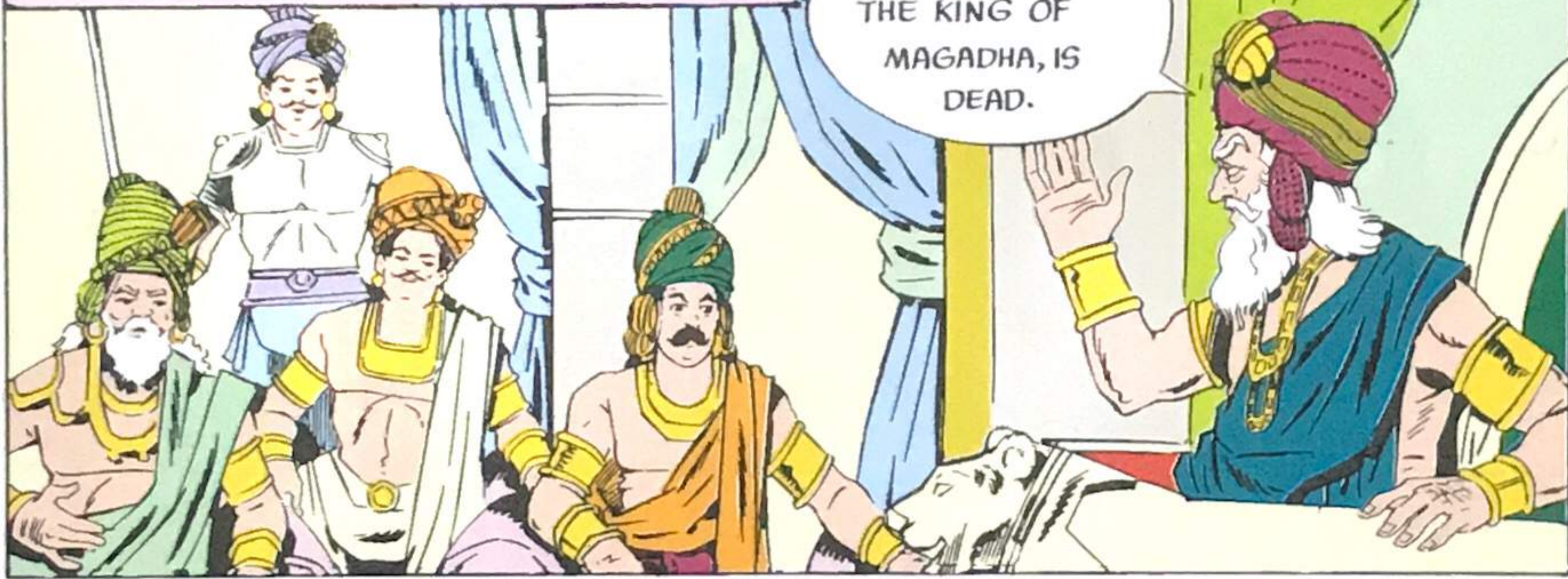
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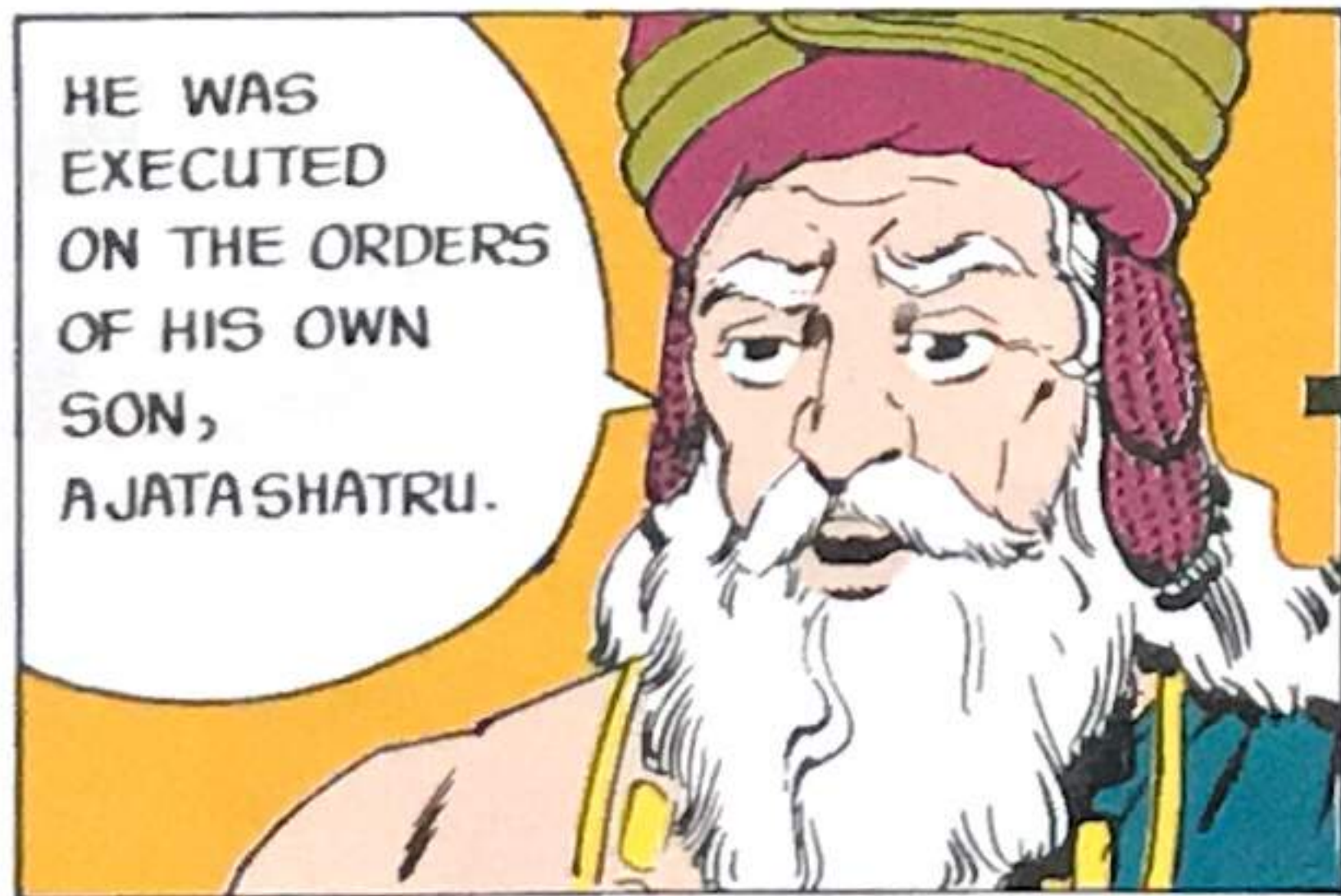
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AJATASHATRU

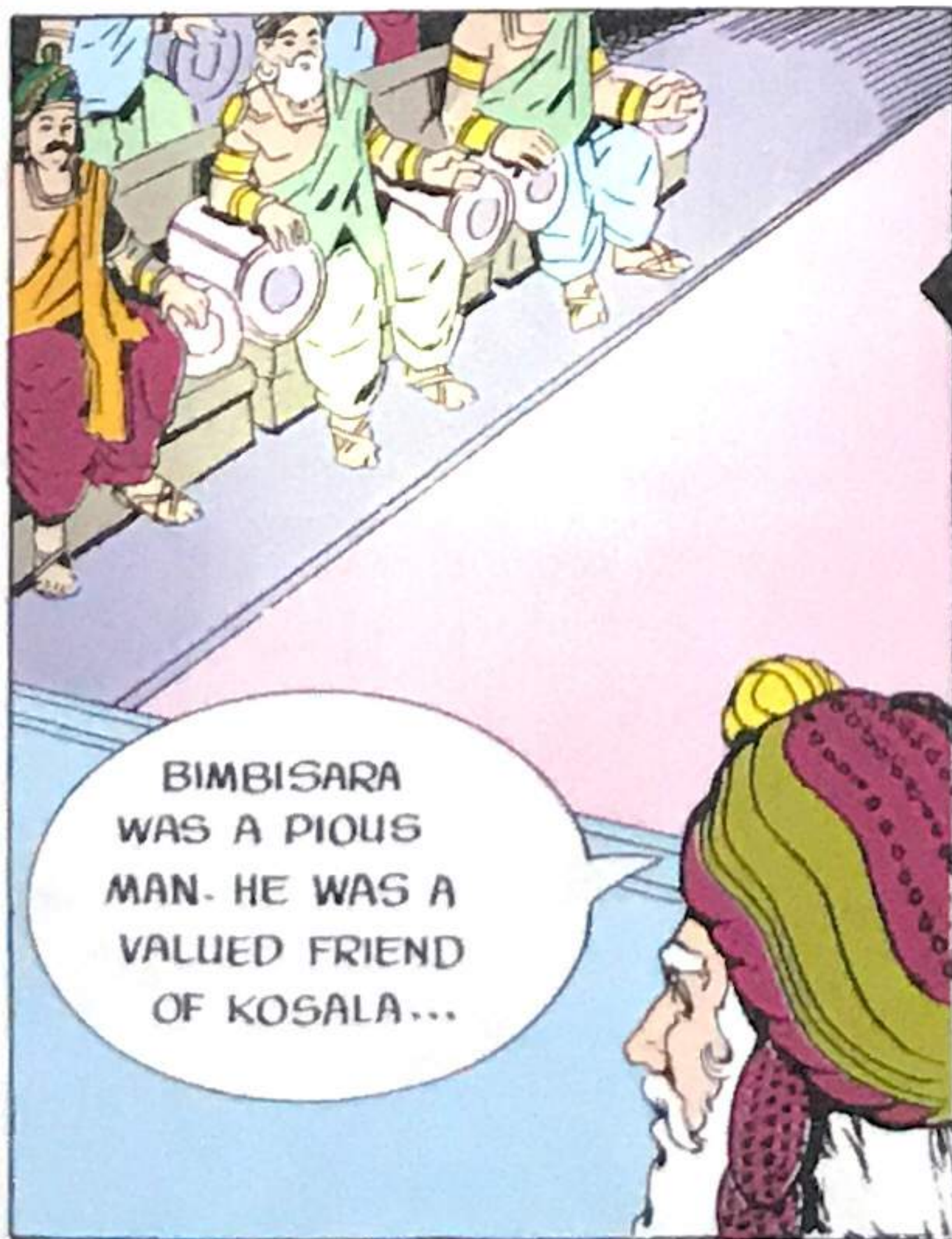
PRASENAJIT, THE KING OF KOSALA, CALLED A MEETING OF HIS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.



HE WAS EXECUTED ON THE ORDERS OF HIS OWN SON, AJATASHATRU.



WE WILL SEVER OUR RELATIONS WITH MAGADHA. WE WILL ALSO CLAIM BACK KASHI WHICH WAS GIFTED TO BIMBISARA.

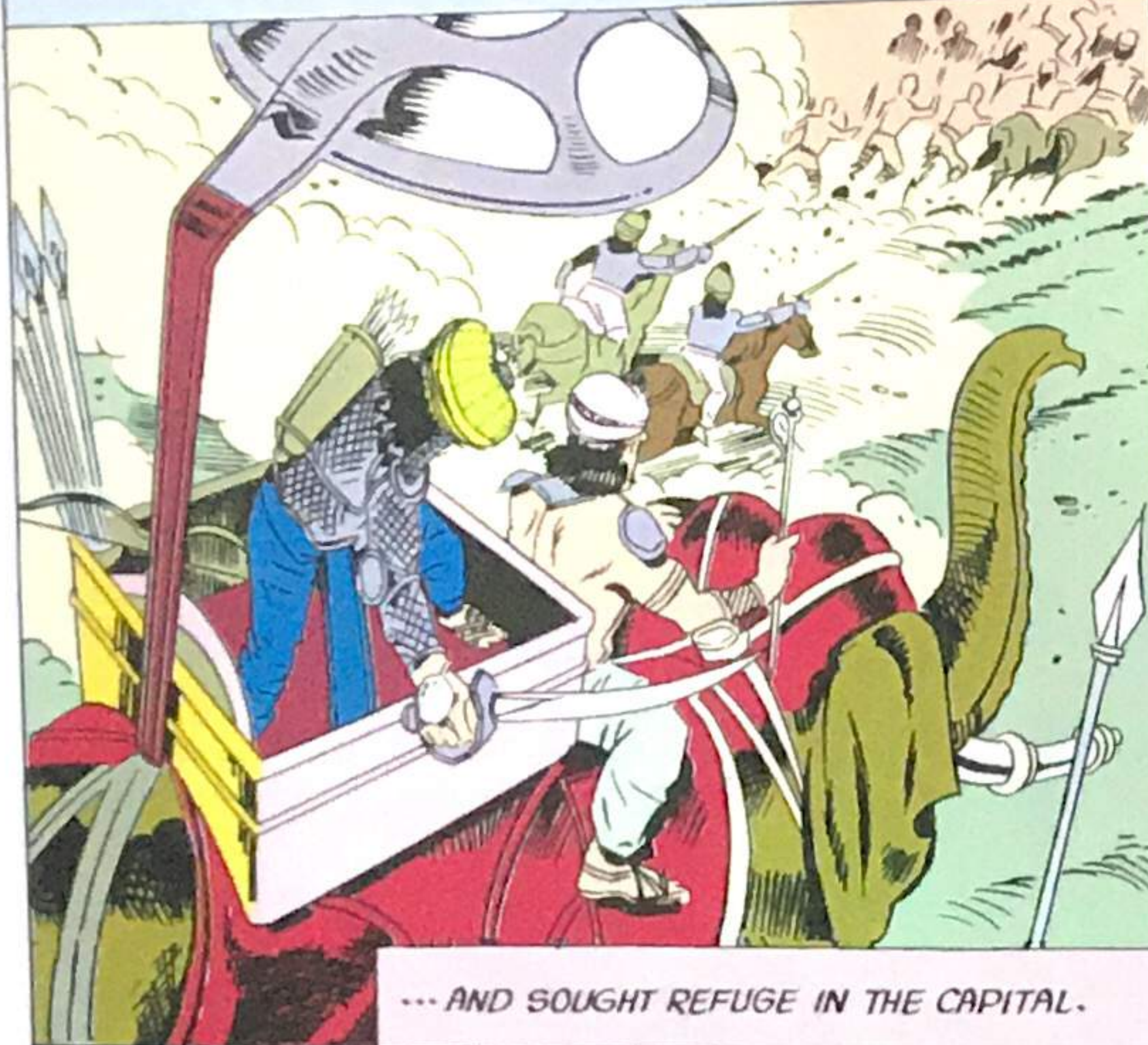


BIMBISARA WAS A PIOUS MAN. HE WAS A VALUED FRIEND OF KOSALA...



...THE ONE WHO KILLED OUR FRIEND IS CONSIDERED AN ENEMY OF KOSALA.

AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED, AJATASHATRU RETALIATED BY MARCHING AGAINST KOSALA AND INFLECTED HEAVY CASUALTIES ON THAT KINGDOM. PRASENAJIT'S MEN FLED THE BATTLEFIELD....



... AND SOUGHT REFUGE IN THE CAPITAL.



MAHARAJ,
OUR MEN ARE
UTTERLY
DEMORALISED.

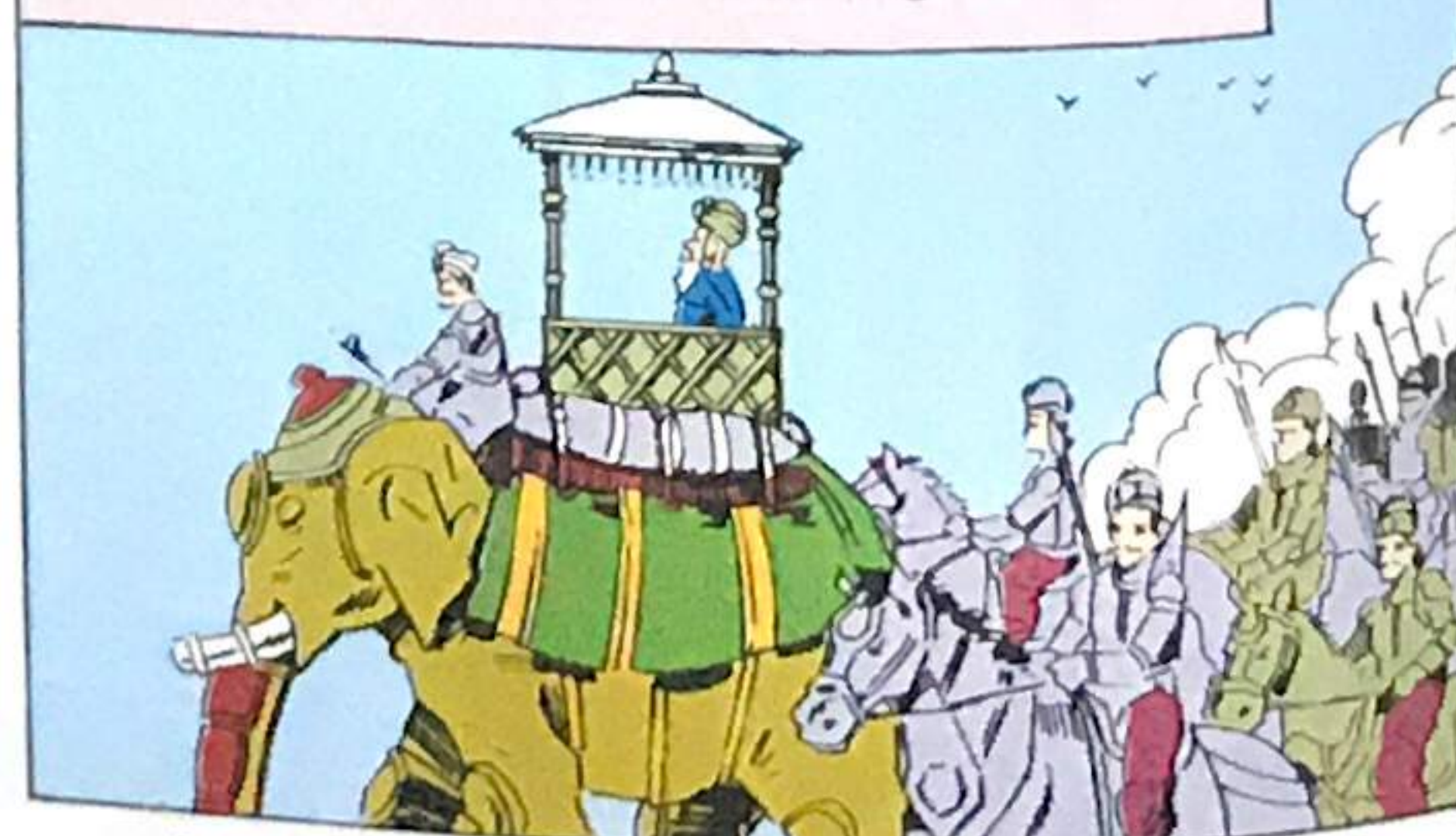


THEY SAY AJATASHATRU
LOOKS LIKE ONE
POSSESSED. NO
ONE CAN STOP
HIM.



HE MUST BE
STOPPED!
FOREVER!

THE AGED KING HIMSELF LED HIS MEN...



... AND ENGAGED AJATASHATRU IN A FIERCE BATTLE.



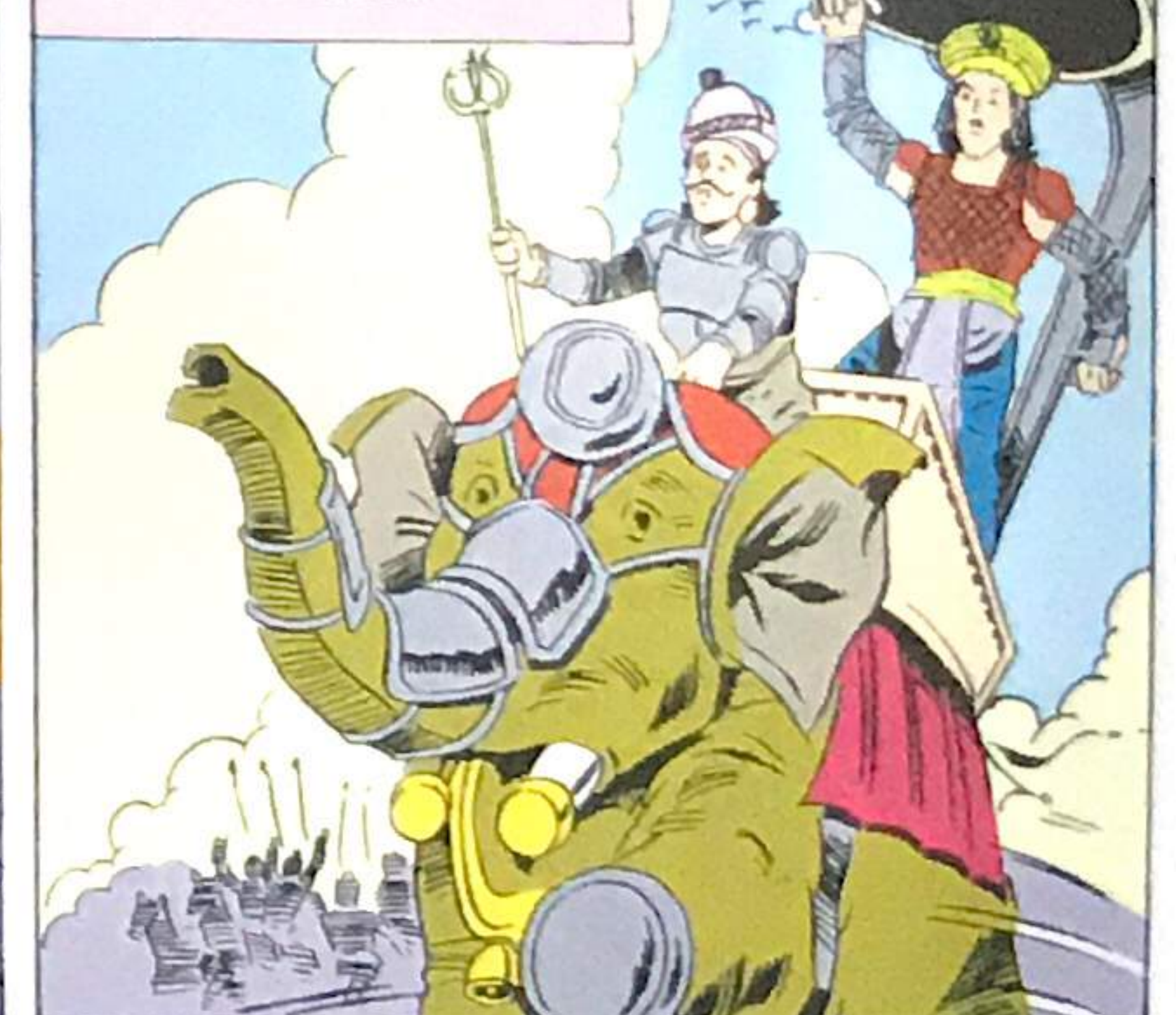
YOU WILL NOT
FIND ME AN EASY
PREY LIKE YOUR
UNARMED FATHER
IN PRISON.

AJATASHATRU WINCED. HE LET OUT A WILD
CRY...



AAA
A...

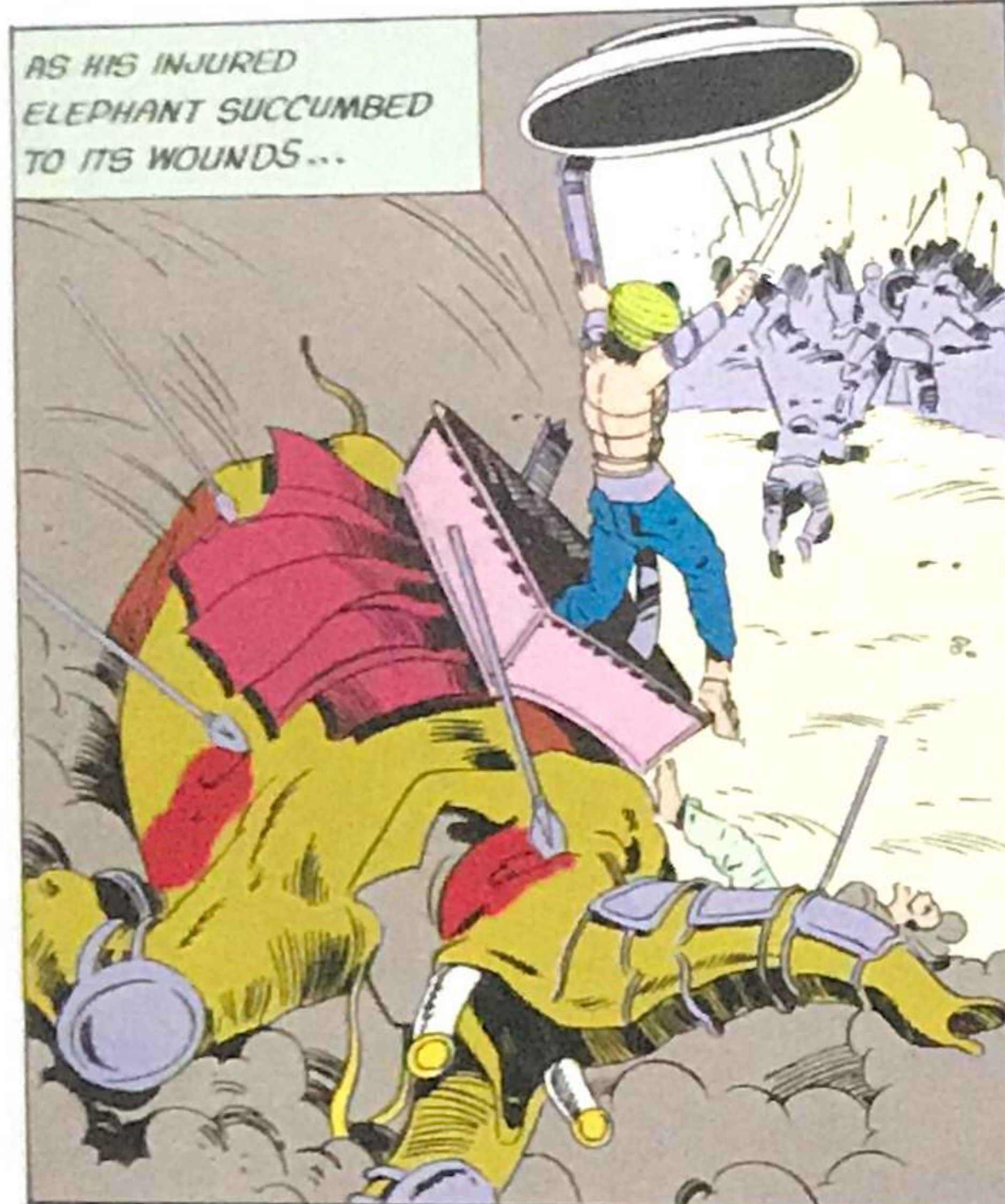
... AND CHARGED.



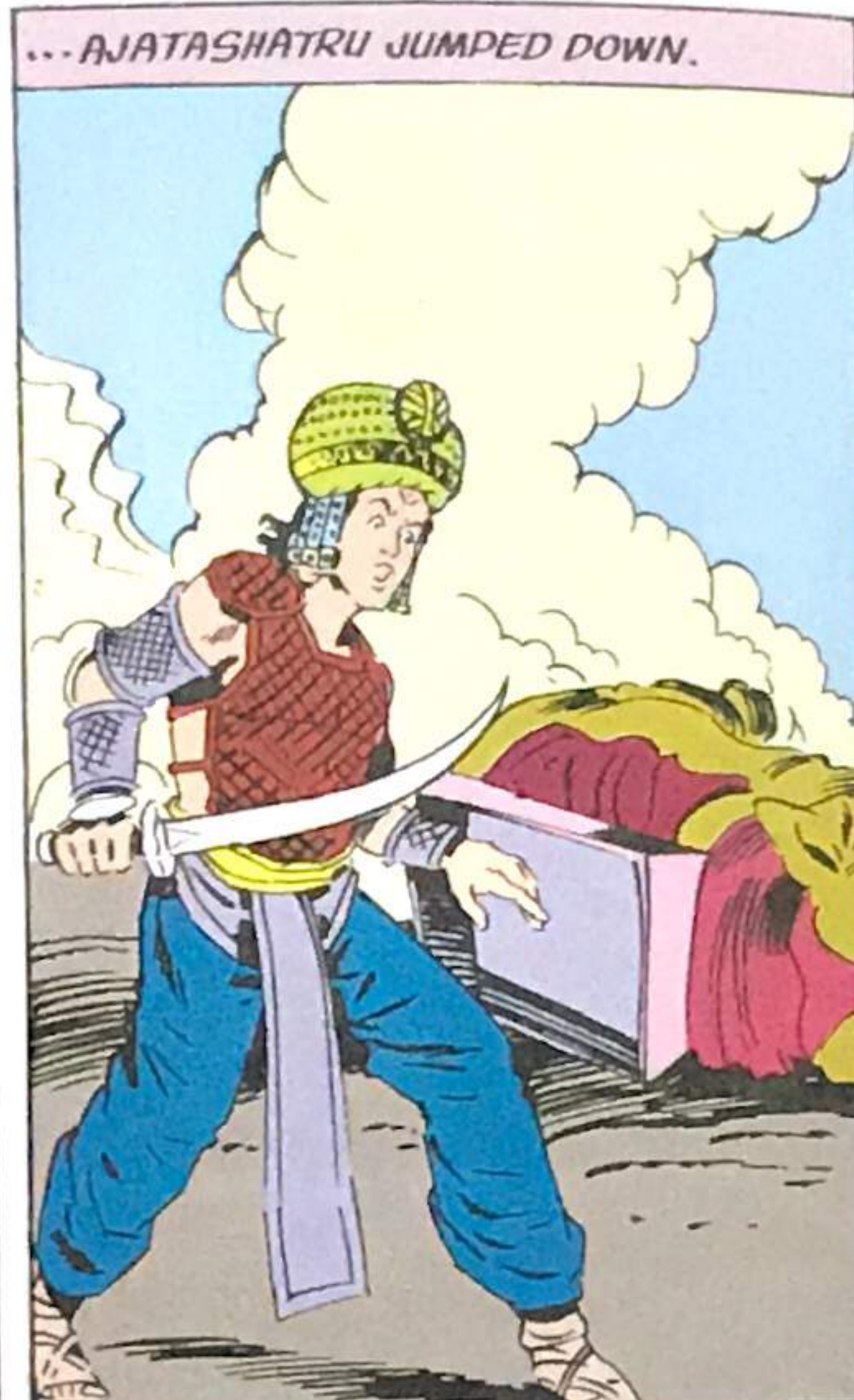
WITH HIS
BRILLIANT
TACTICS
PRASENAJIT
SOON ISOLATED
AJATASHATRU.



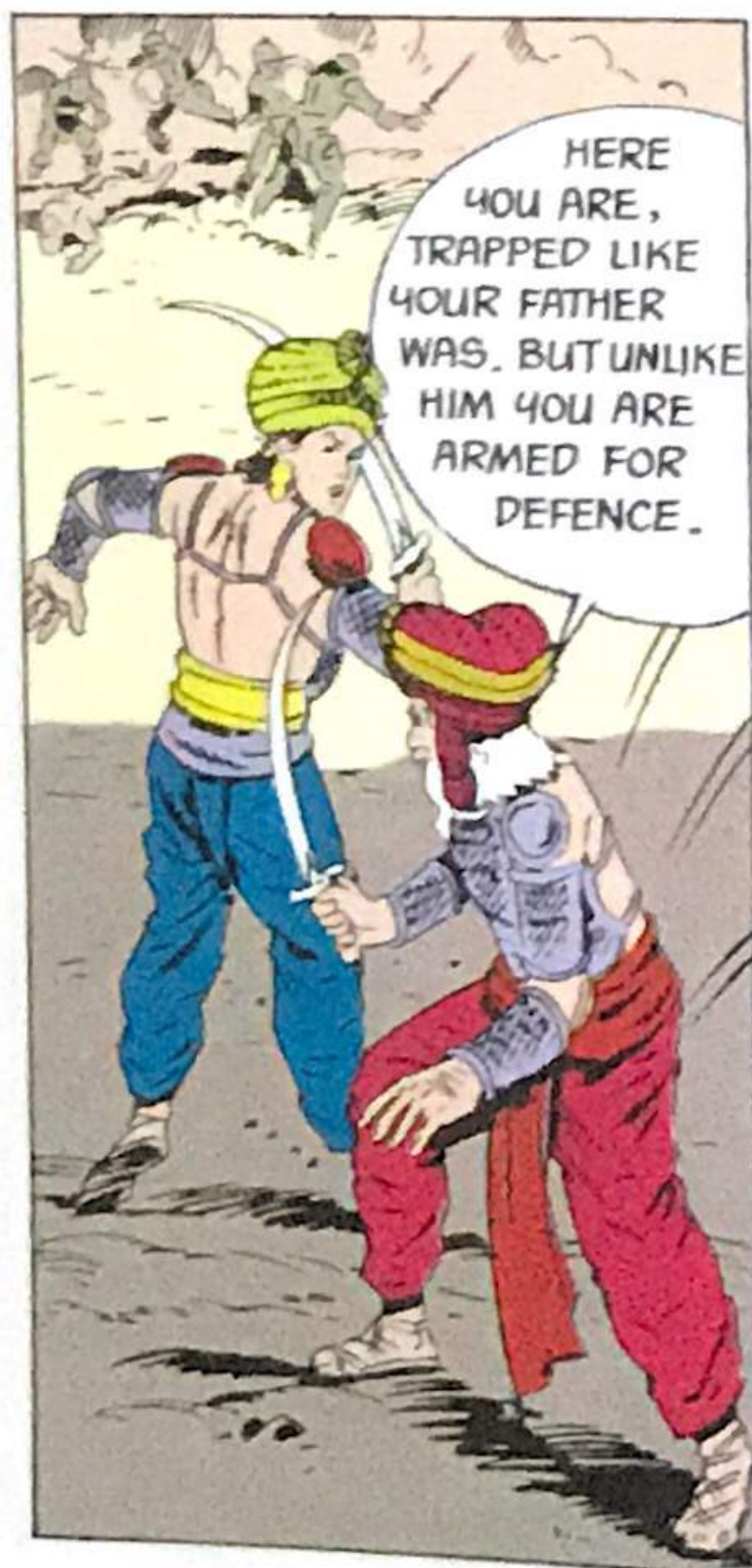
HE SEEMS
HAPPY
TO BE
SURROUNDED.



AS HIS INJURED ELEPHANT SUCCUMBED TO ITS WOUNDS...



...AJATASHATRU JUMPED DOWN.



HERE YOU ARE, TRAPPED LIKE YOUR FATHER WAS. BUT UNLIKE HIM YOU ARE ARMED FOR DEFENCE.

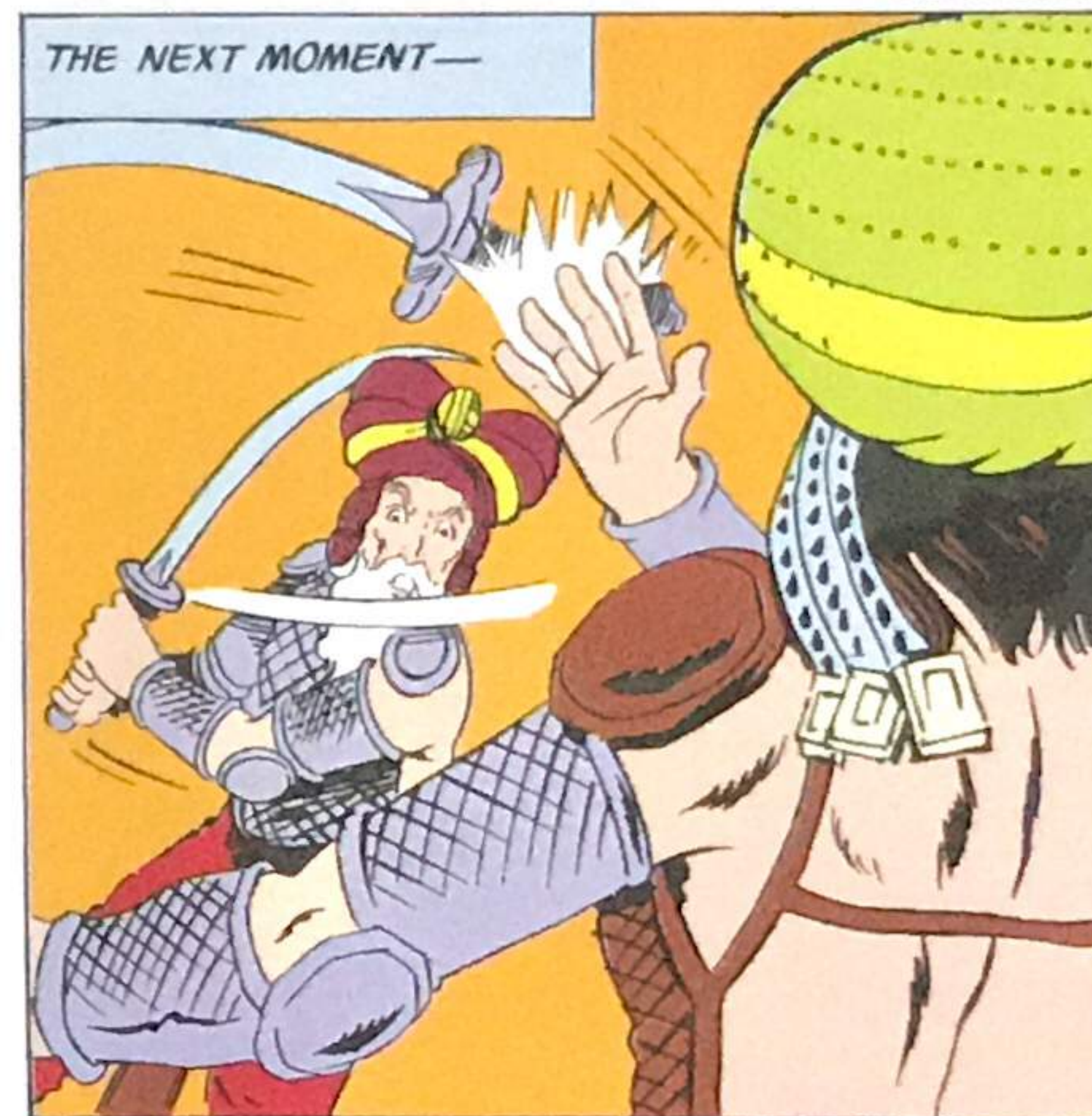


WHEREAS YOUR POOR FATHER WAS SLAUGHTERED LIKE A HELPLESS ANIMAL.

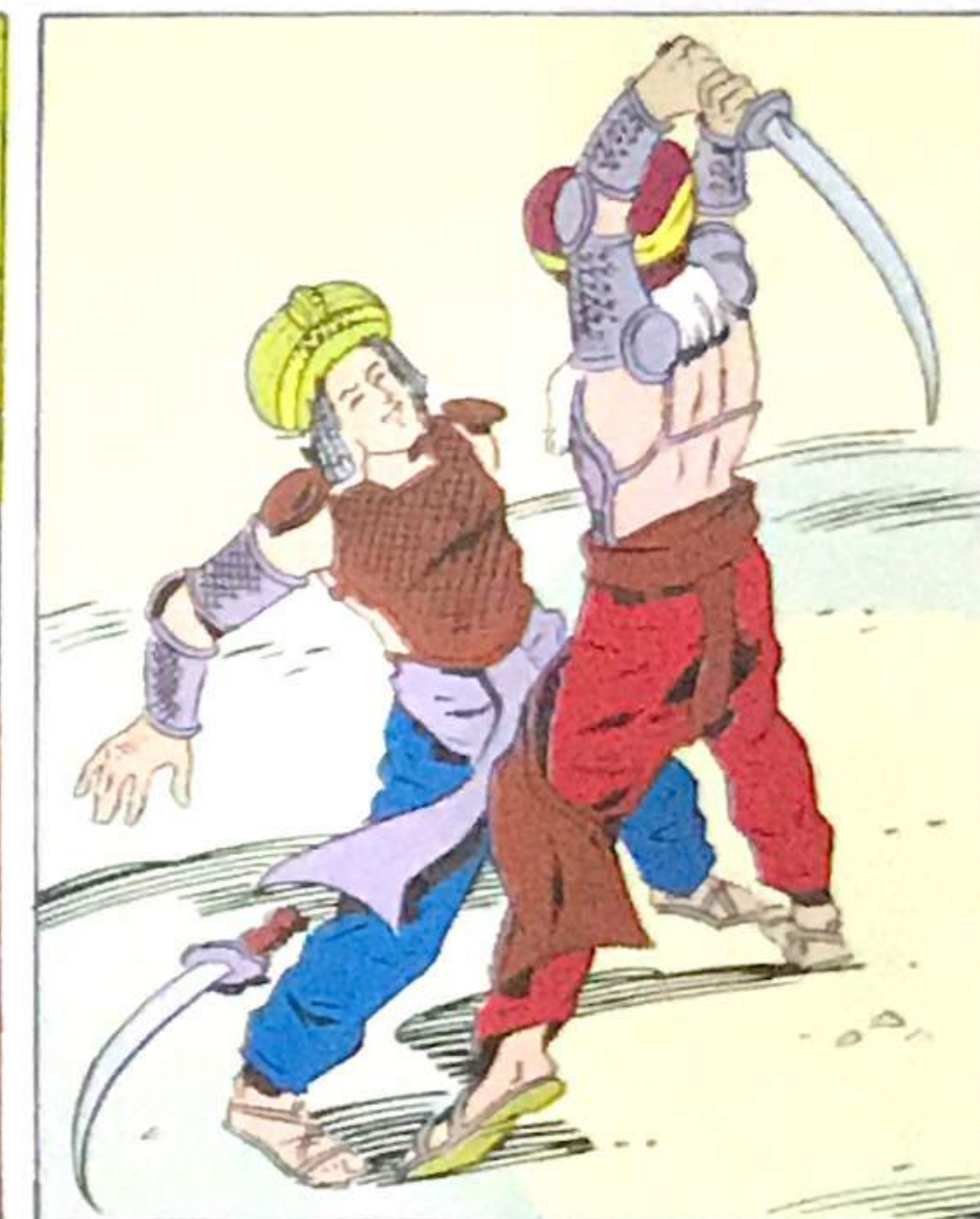


AJATASHATRU LET OUT A PIERCING CRY AND ATTACKED PRASENAJIT WITH UNBOUNDED FURY.

AAAAA...



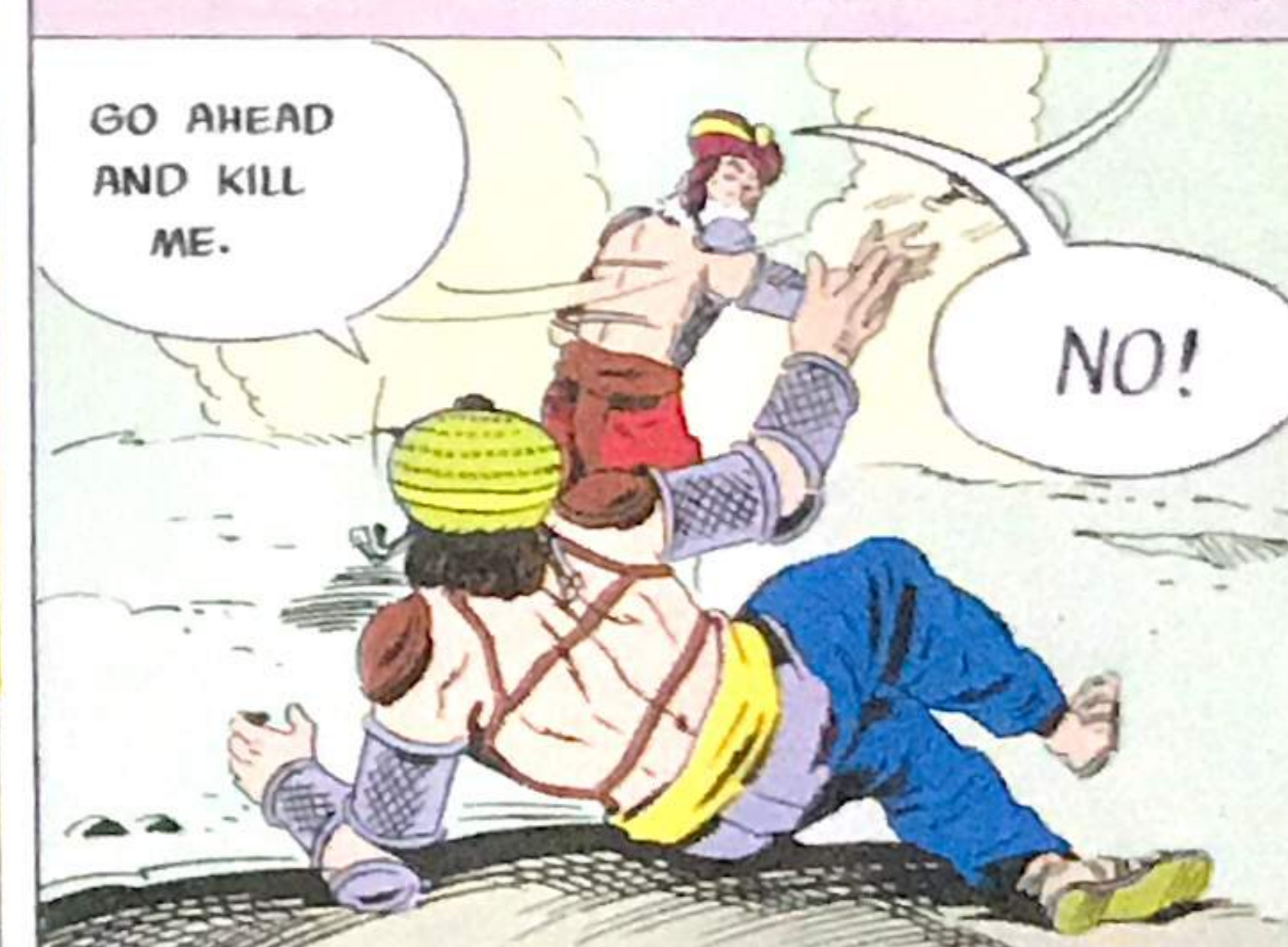
THE NEXT MOMENT—



AS PRASENAJIT WAS ABOUT TO BRING HIS SWORD DOWN, HE SAW A STRANGE EXPRESSION IN AJATASHATRU'S EYES.



THE NEXT MOMENT PRASENAJIT THREW AWAY HIS SWORD.



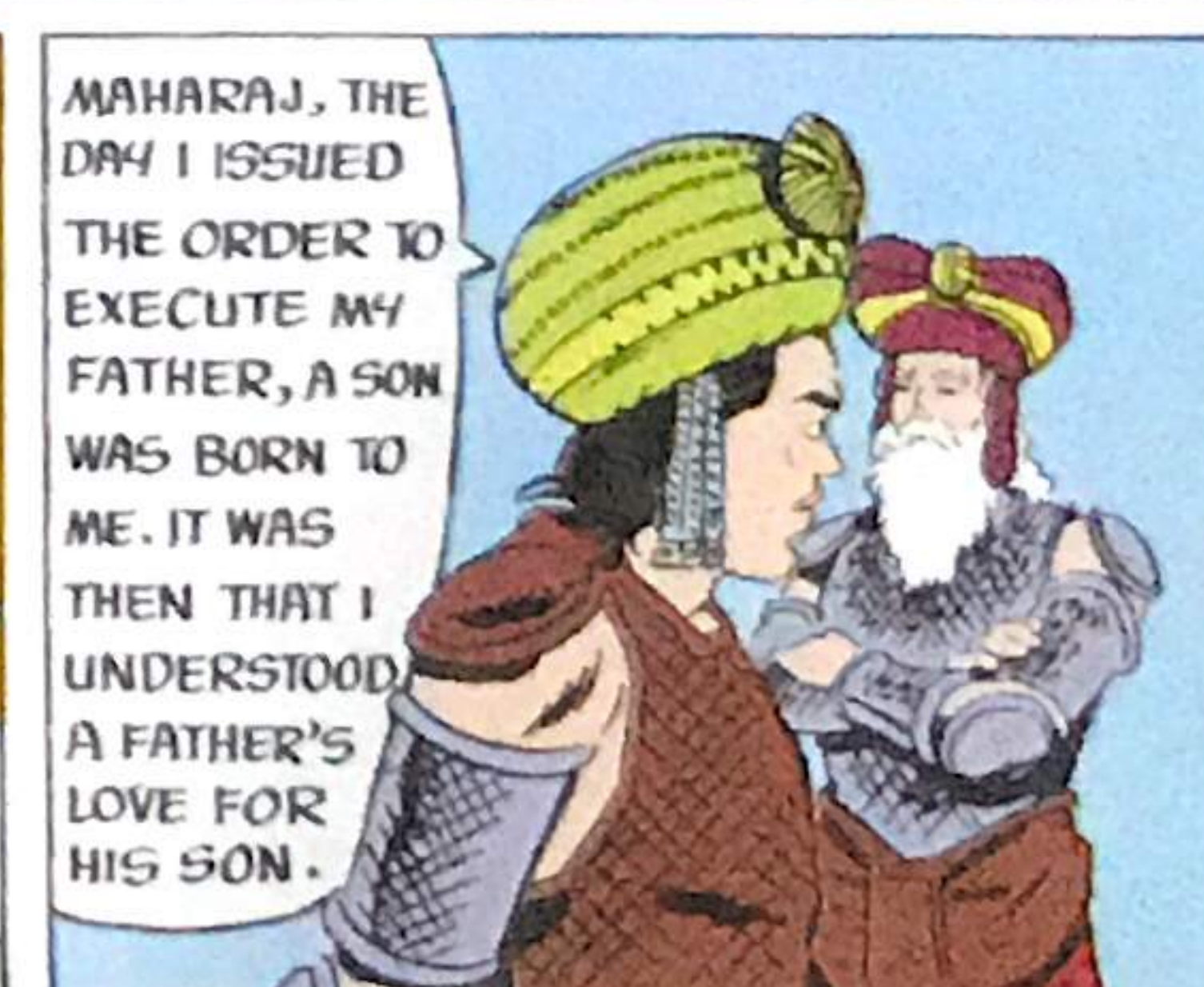
GO AHEAD AND KILL ME.

NO!



COME ON, KILL ME, I WANT TO DIE.

WHY?



MAHARAJ, THE DAY I ISSUED THE ORDER TO EXECUTE MY FATHER, A SON WAS BORN TO ME. IT WAS THEN THAT I UNDERSTOOD A FATHER'S LOVE FOR HIS SON.

I NO LONGER WANTED TO HAVE MY FATHER KILLED. BUT ALAS! MY ORDERS HAD ALREADY BEEN CARRIED OUT.



I HAVE KNOWN NO PEACE SINCE THEN. NO POWER CAN BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE.



WOULD YOU CARE TO LISTEN TO THE ADVICE OF AN OLD MAN, A FRIEND OF YOUR DEAD FATHER?

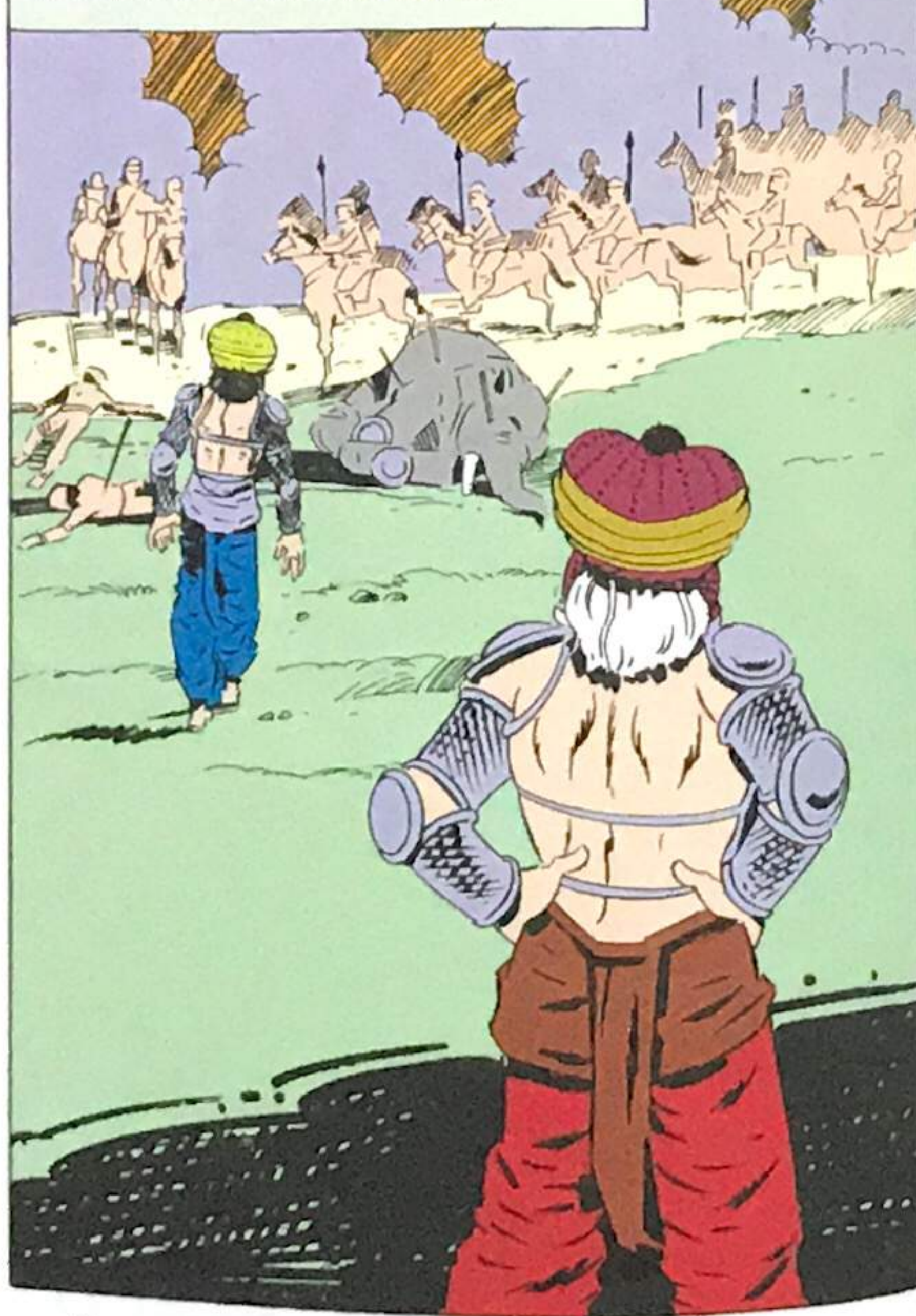


AJATASHATRU WAITED —

IF YOU WANT TO LESSEN YOUR BURDEN OF GUILT, THEN SEEK PEACE, NOT WAR. SEEK LIFE, NOT DEATH.



AJATASHATRU WALKED AWAY.



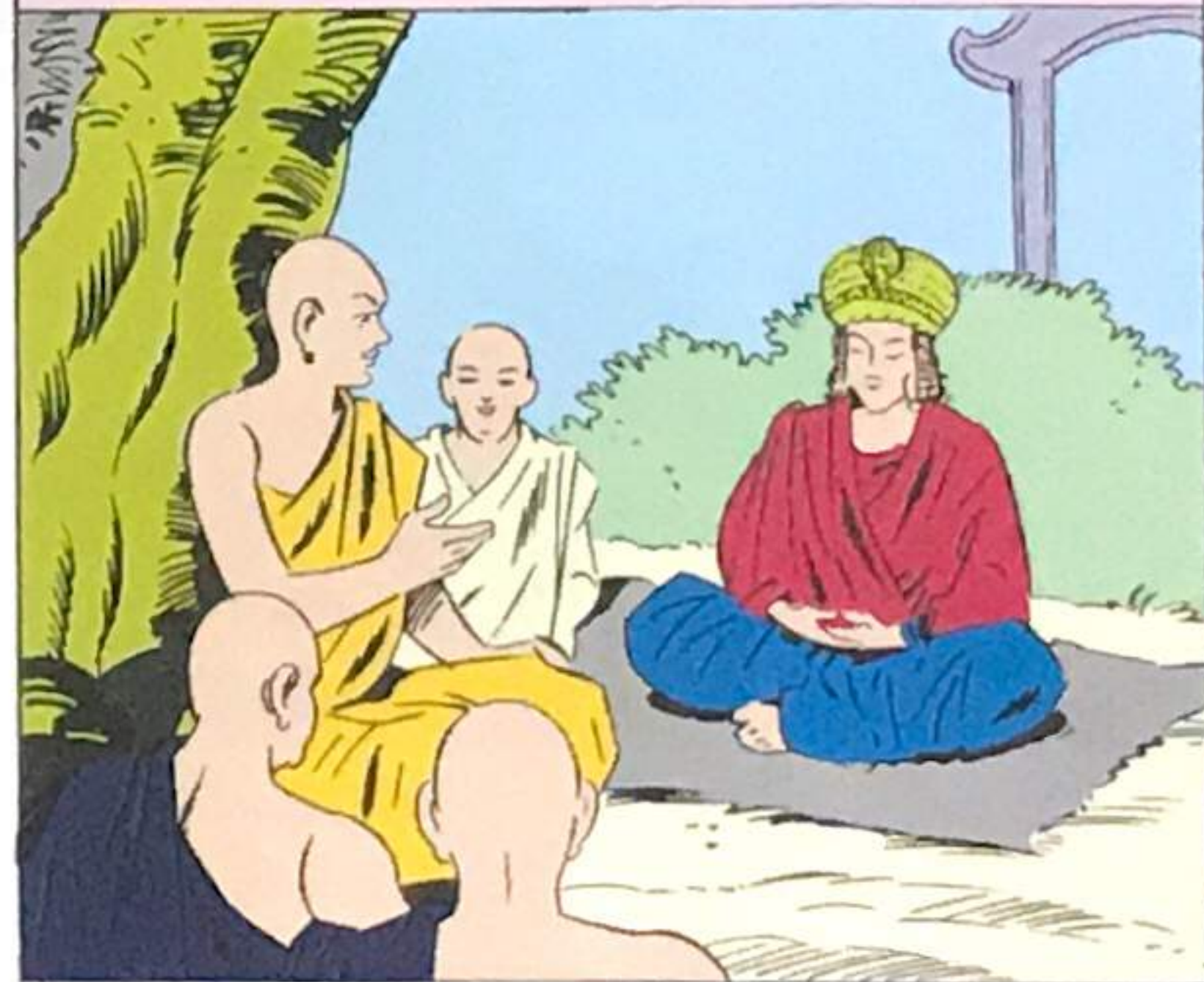
BACK IN HIS CAPITAL RAJAGRIHA, AJATASHATRU CONTINUED TO BE AGONISED BY REMORSE.



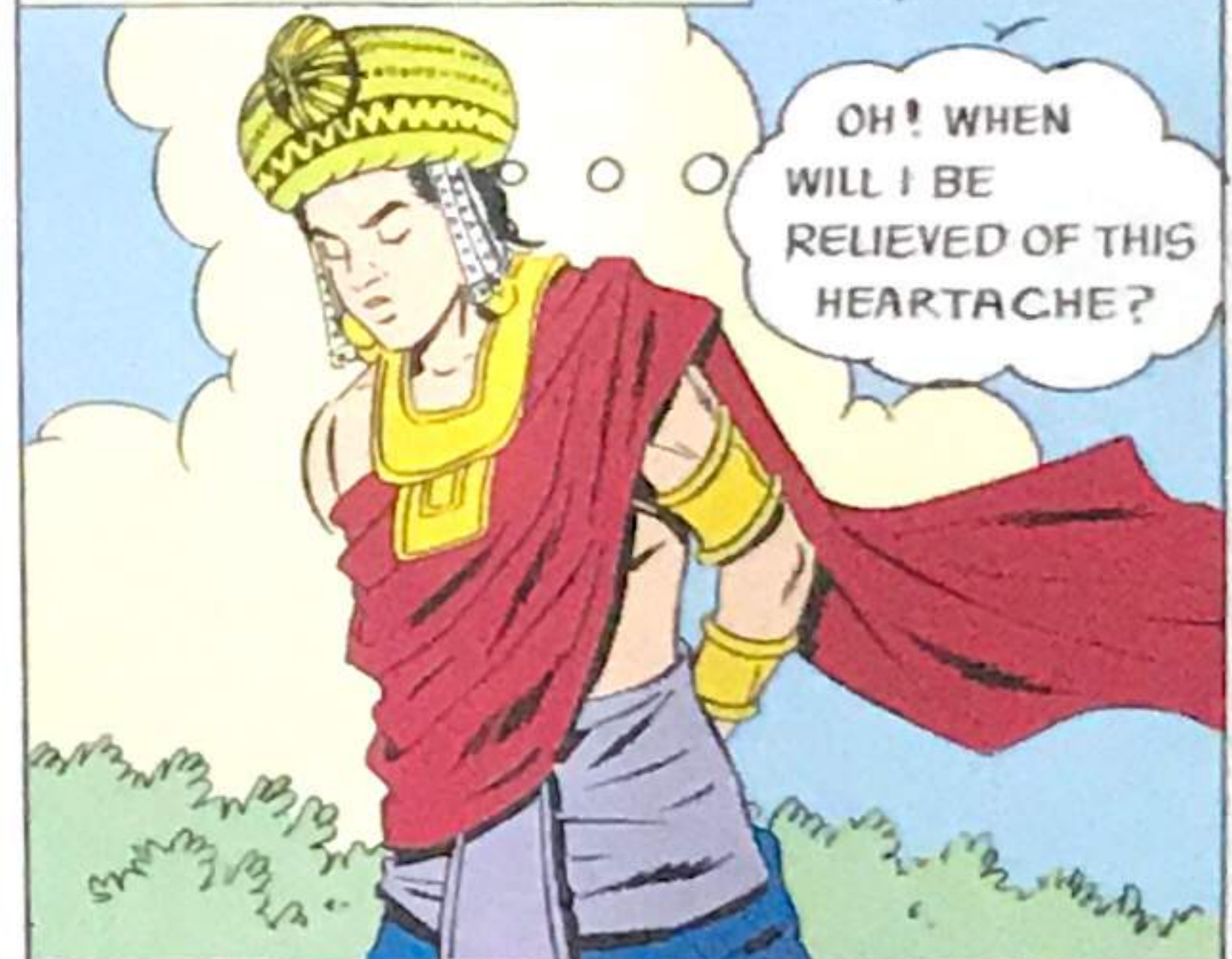
NEITHER AMUSEMENTS...



...NOR THE COMPANY OF MEN OF RELIGION...



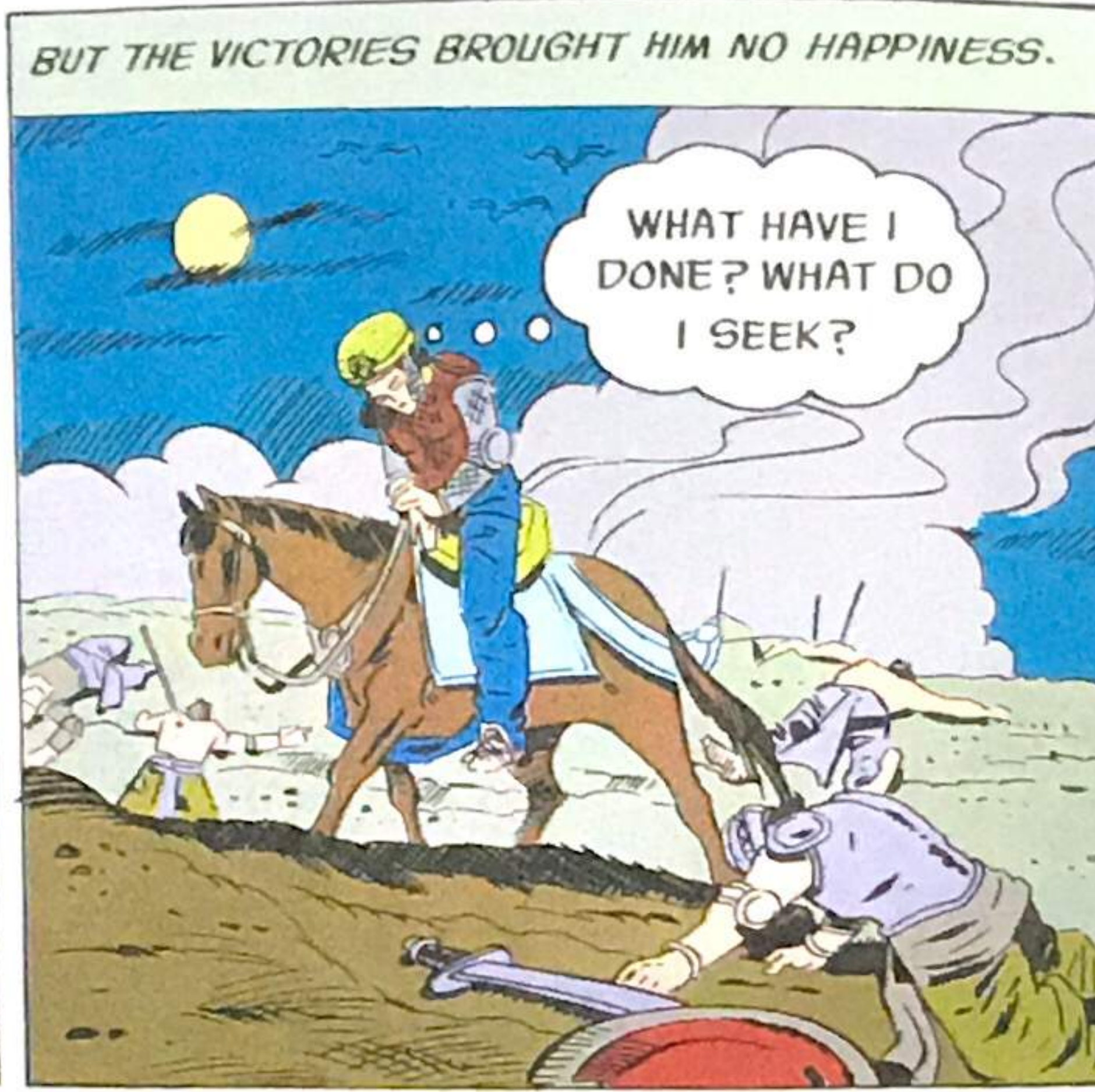
...BROUGHT HIM SOLACE.



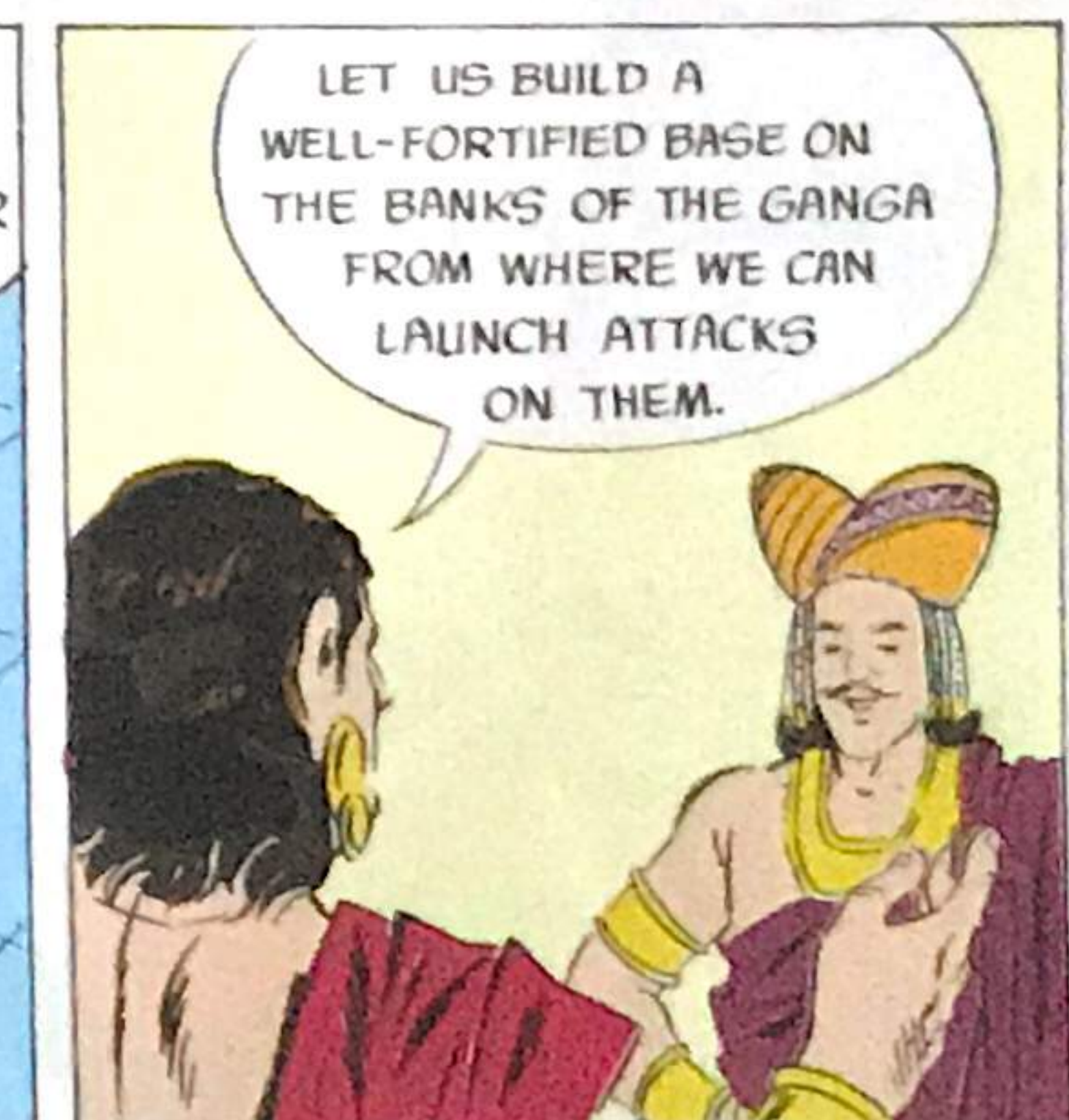
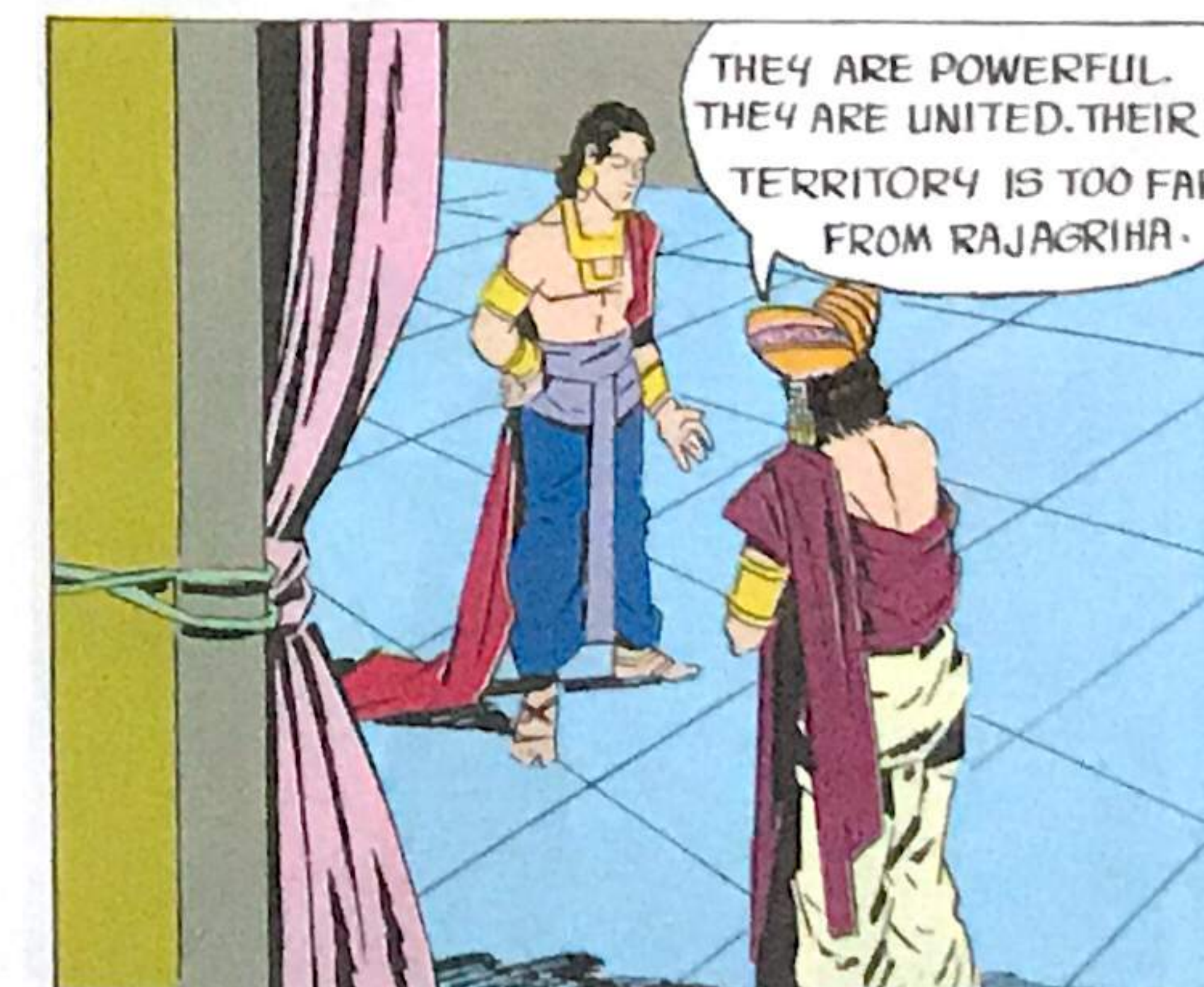
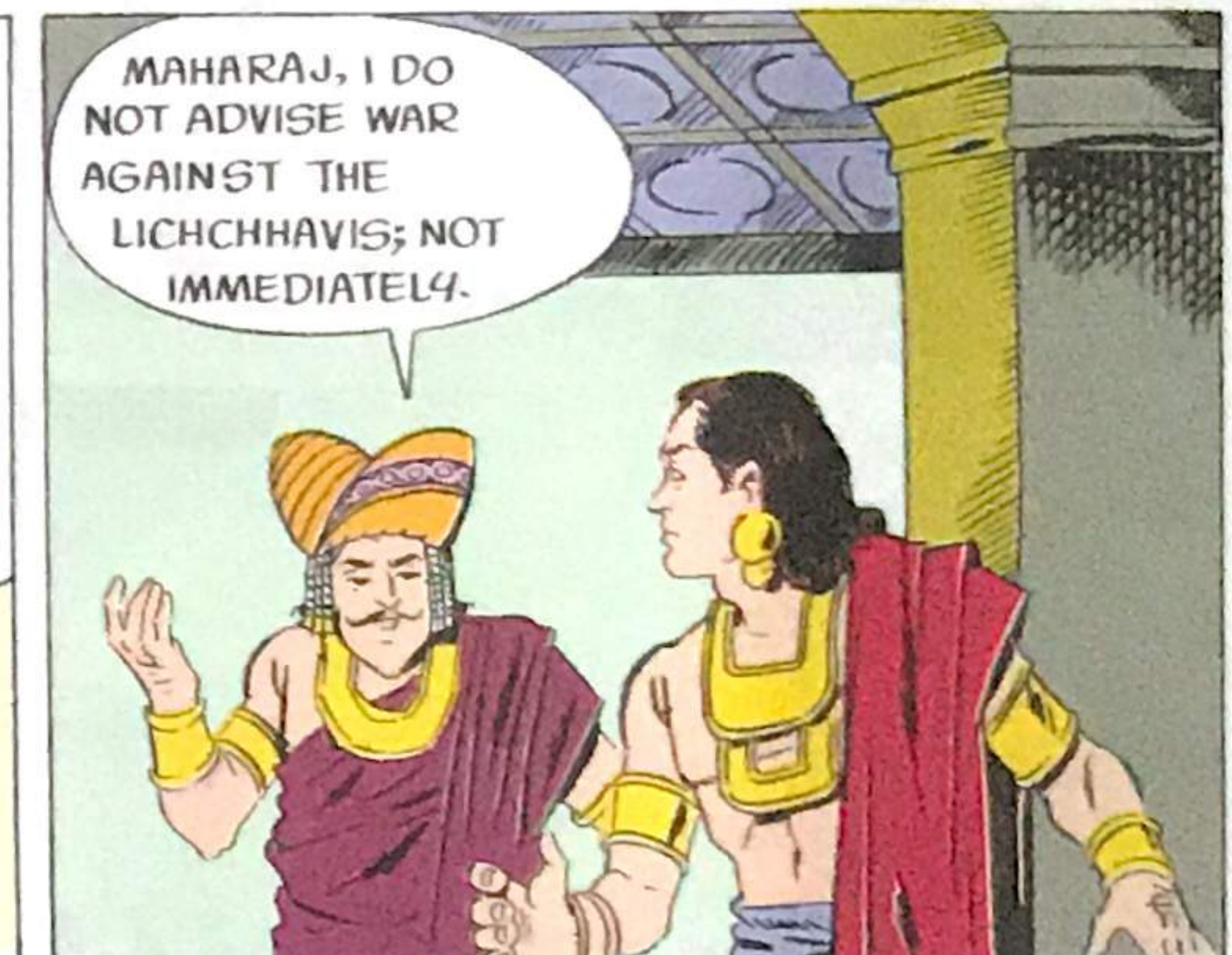
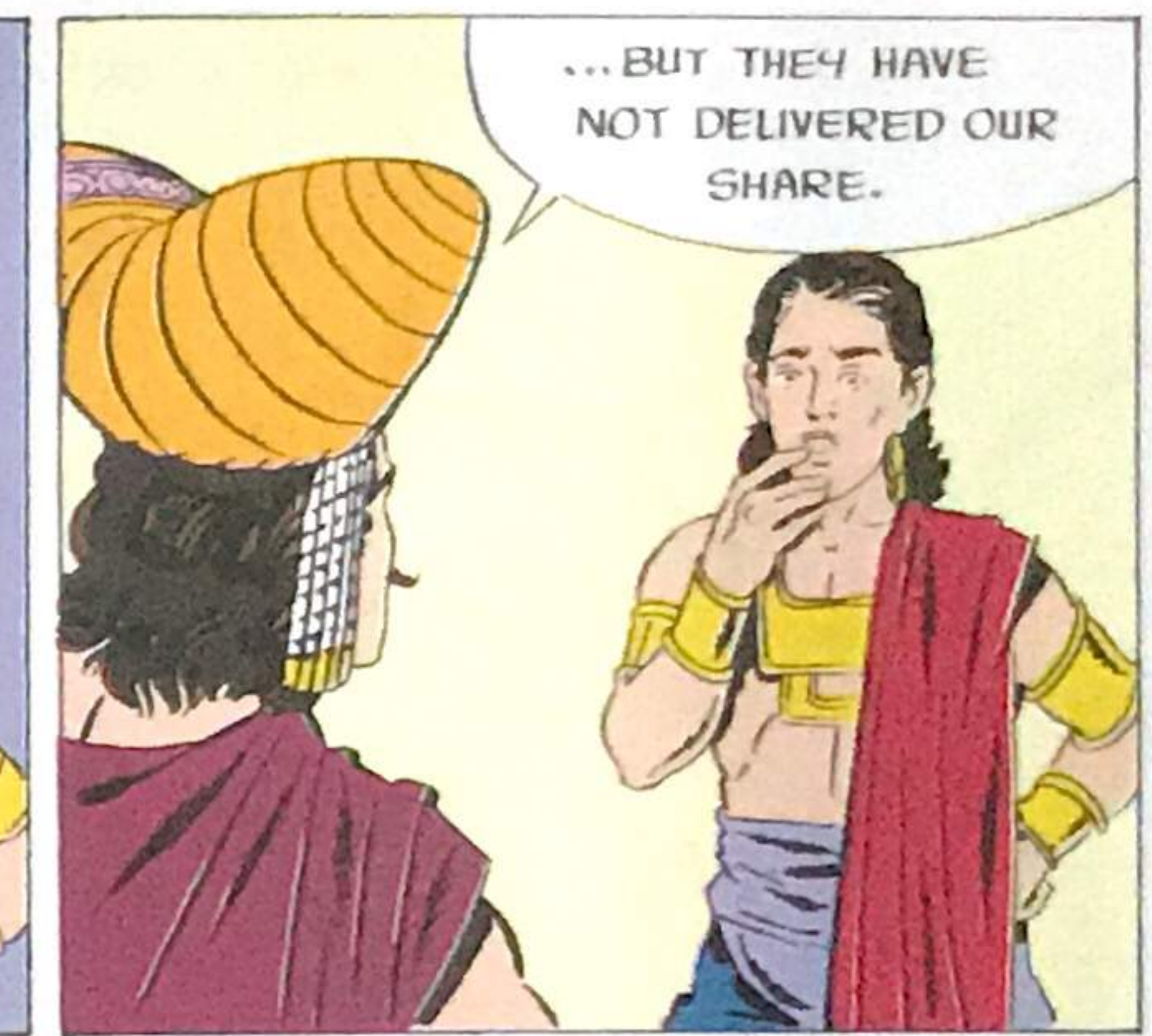
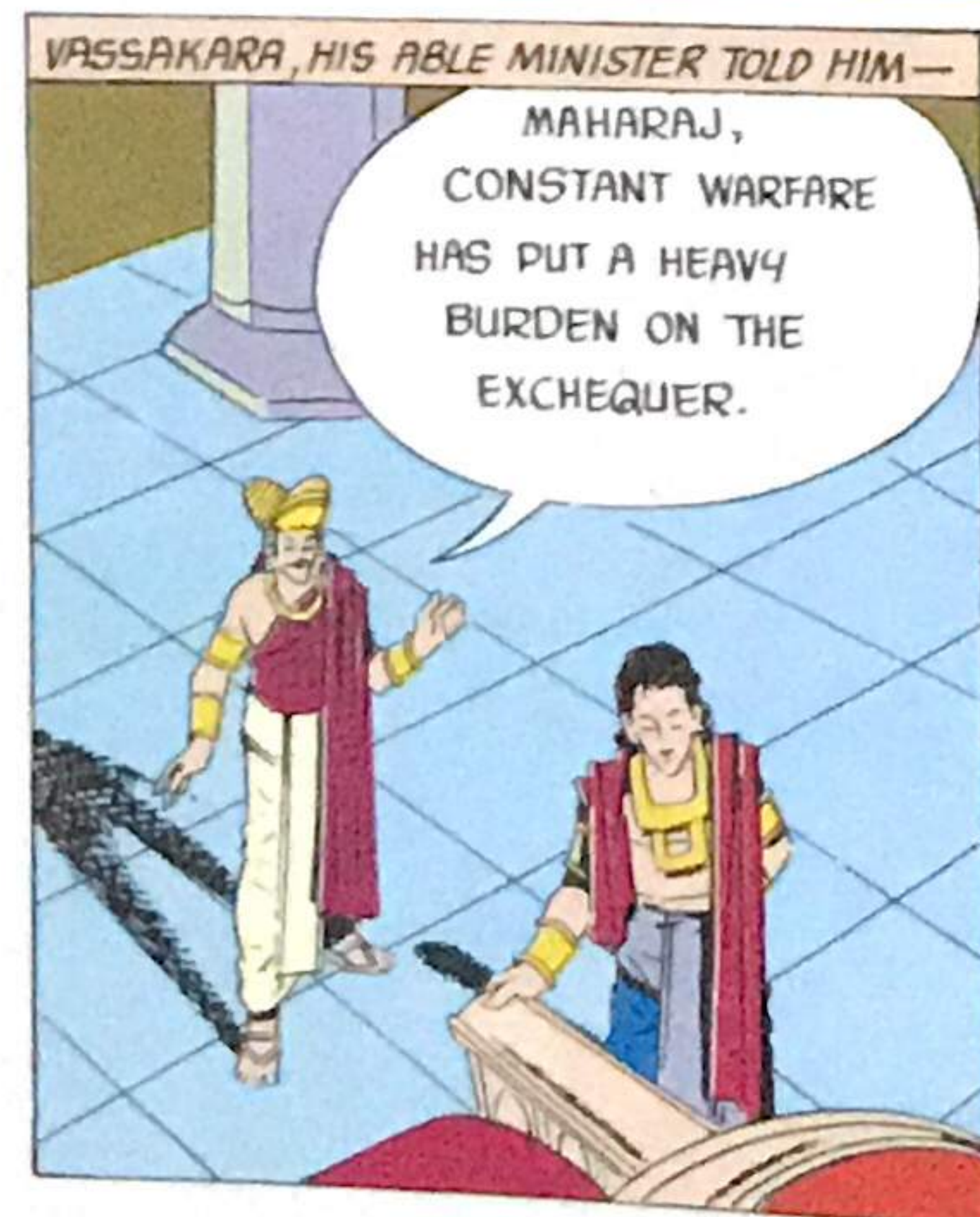
OH! WHEN WILL I BE RELIEVED OF THIS HEARTACHE?

HE BEGAN TO SPEND MORE TIME IN THE GYMNASIUM...





HE COULD NOT SIT IDLE BECAUSE OF HIS MENTAL AGONY. HE DREADED PEACEFUL MOMENTS.



WORK BEGAN ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FORTIFIED CITY ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGA.



IT TOOK TWO YEARS FOR THE CITY TO BE READY.

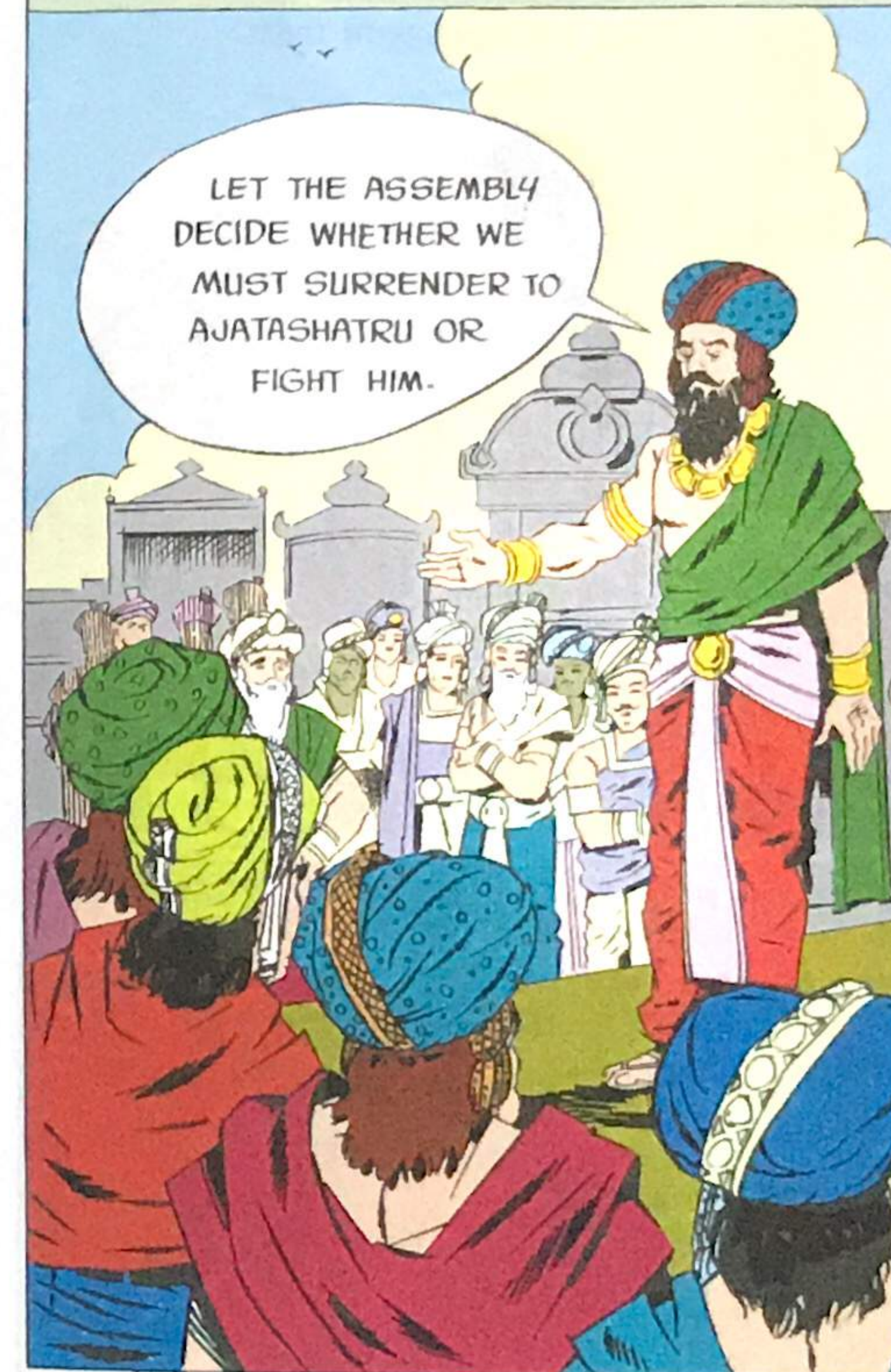


PATALIPUTRA!
THIS WILL BE OUR
NEW CAPITAL!



NOW I AM
READY FOR
THE
LICHCHHAVIS.

THE LICHCHHAVIS TOO WERE EQUALLY PREPARED. THEIR LEADER CHETAKA WAS AN ABLE ADMINISTRATOR.



LET THE ASSEMBLY
DECIDE WHETHER WE
MUST SURRENDER TO
AJATASHATRU OR
FIGHT HIM.

UNLIKE OTHER STATES, THE LICHCHHAVIS DID NOT BELIEVE IN THE RULE OF ONE MAN. FROM TIME TO TIME PEOPLE DECIDED AS TO WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER THE STATE AND ELECTED SUITABLE MEN TO RULE THEM.

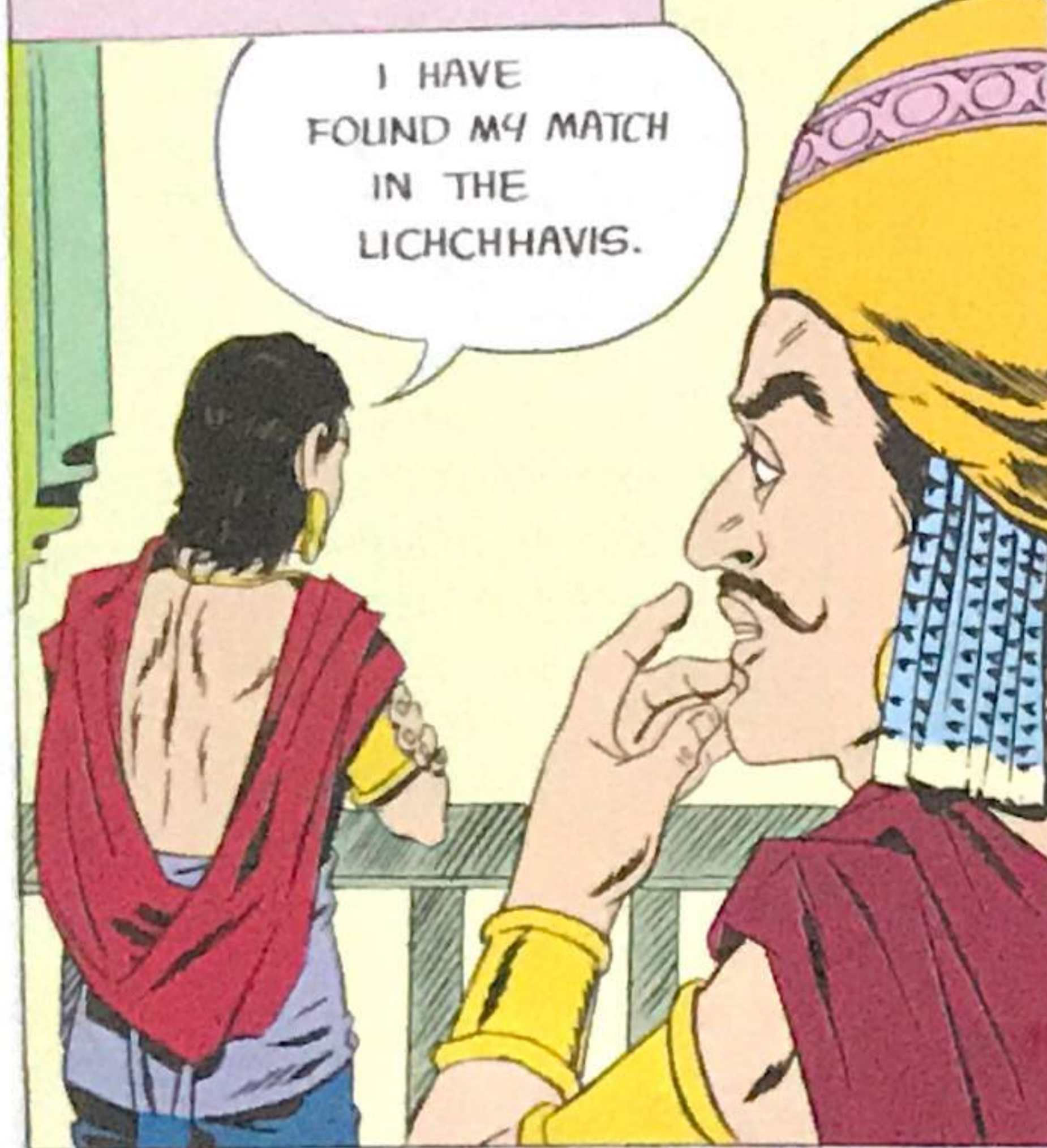
AJATASHATRU NOT ONLY POSES A THREAT TO OUR STATE, BUT ALSO TO OUR WAY OF LIFE AND OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. I SUGGEST THAT WE FIGHT HIM

WE APPROVE.
AJATASHATRU MUST
BE HUMBLD.

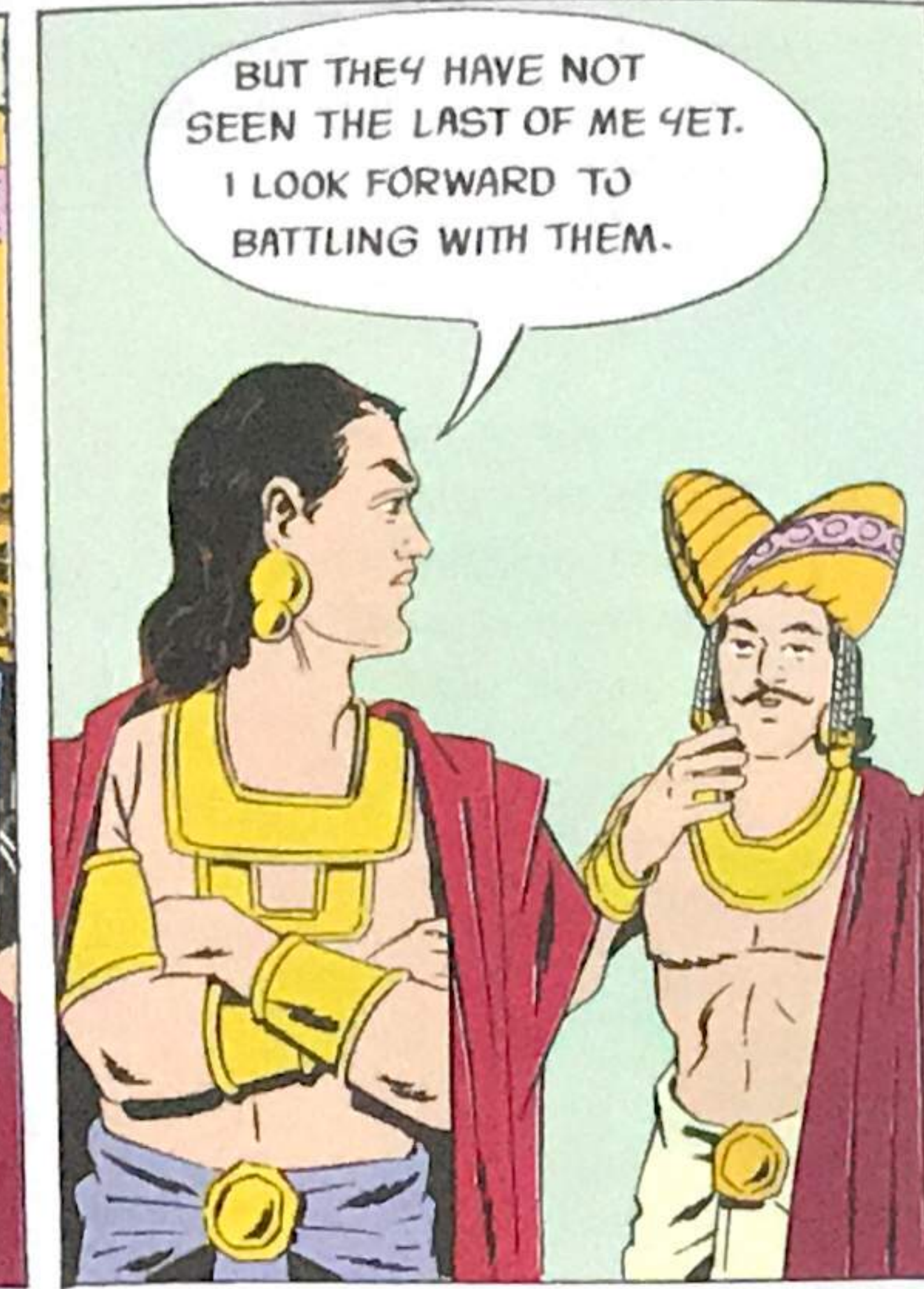
THE LICHCHHAVIS FOUGHT FIERCELY AND PUT AJATASHATRU'S MEN ON THE RUN.



BACK IN PATALIPUTRA —



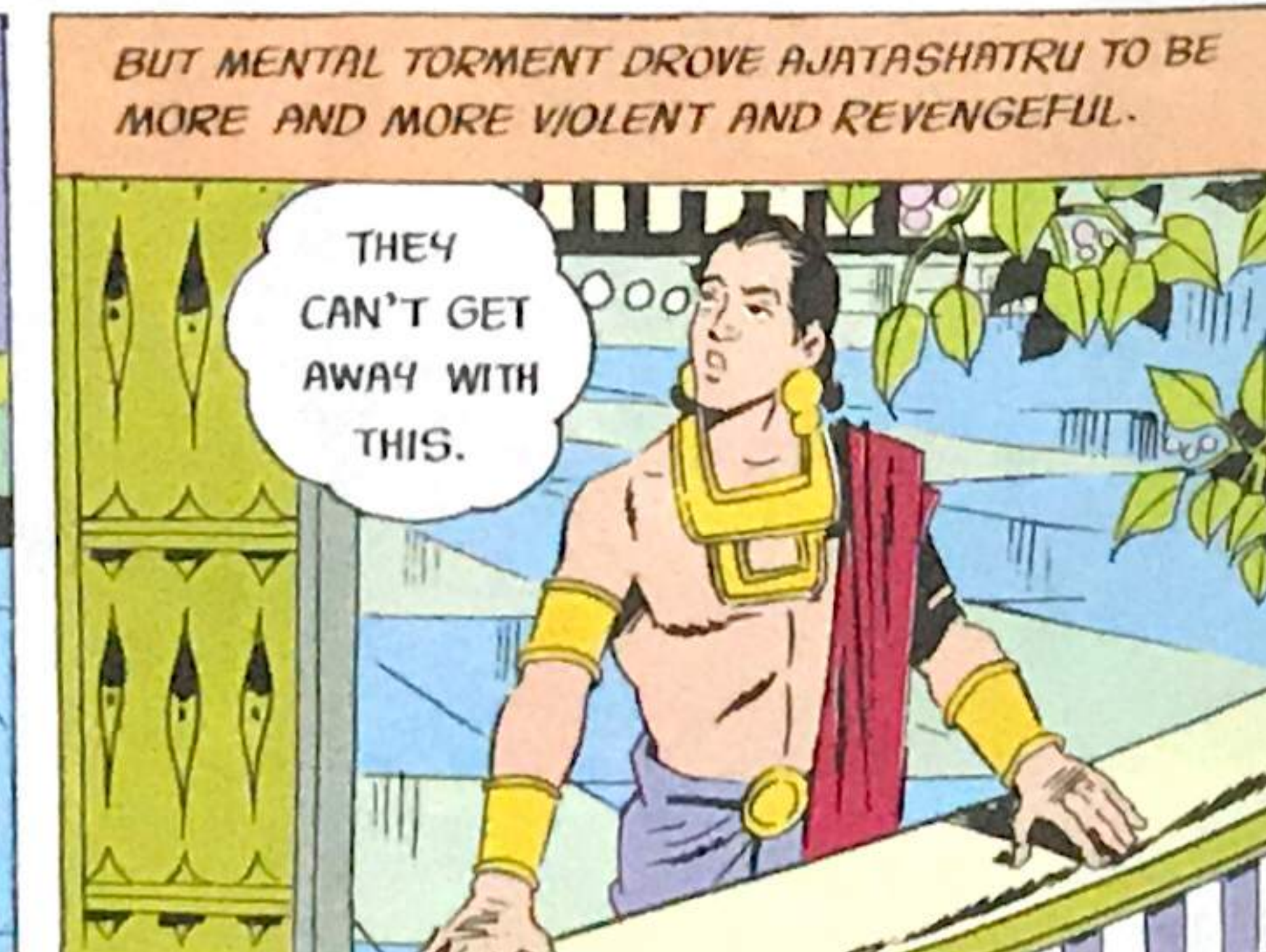
I HAVE FOUND MY MATCH IN THE LICHCHHAVIS.



BUT THEY HAVE NOT SEEN THE LAST OF ME YET. I LOOK FORWARD TO BATTLING WITH THEM.

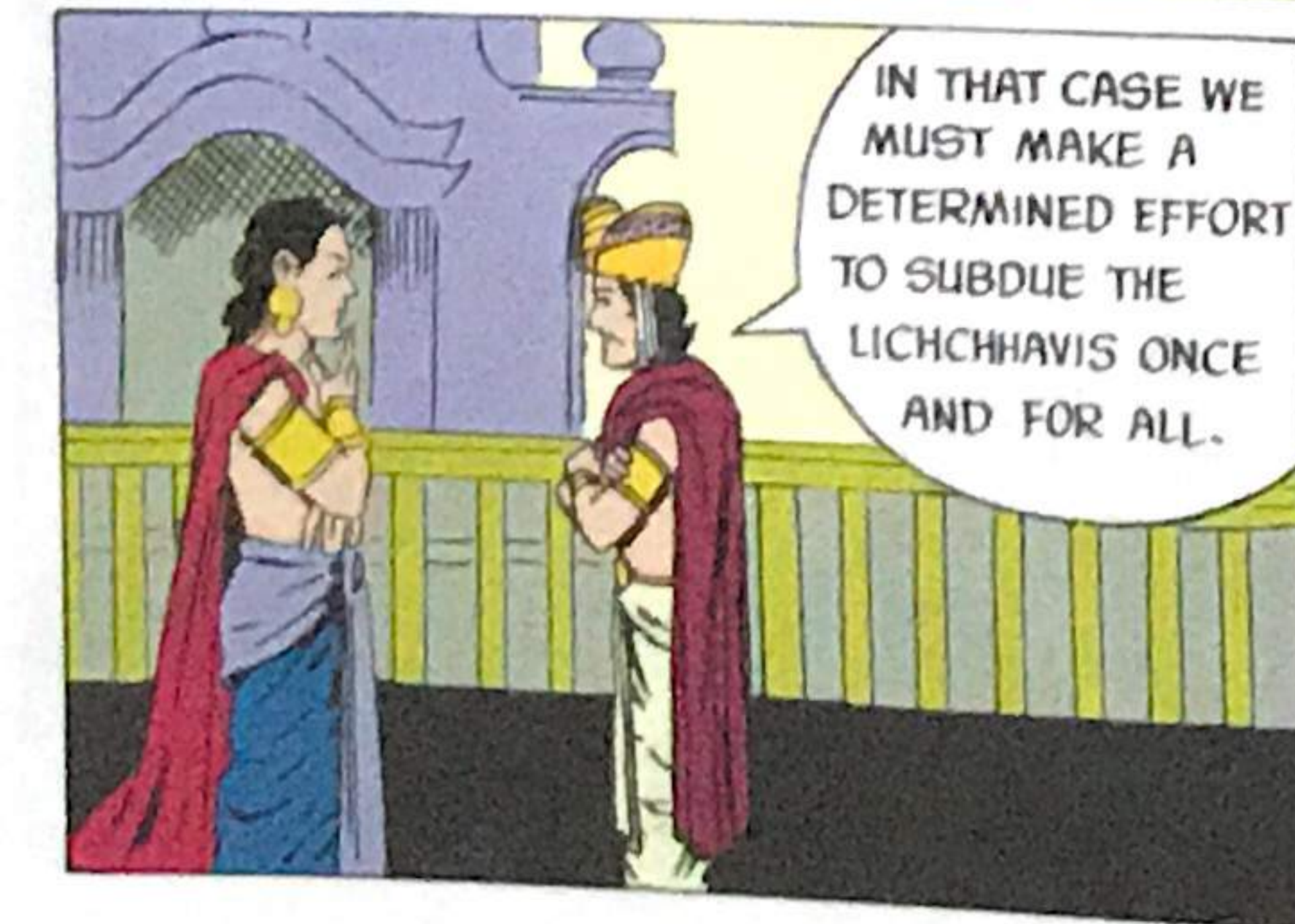


MAHARAJ, REPEATED INDECISIVE BATTLES ARE PLAYING HAVOC WITH THE MORALE OF OUR SOLDIERS.

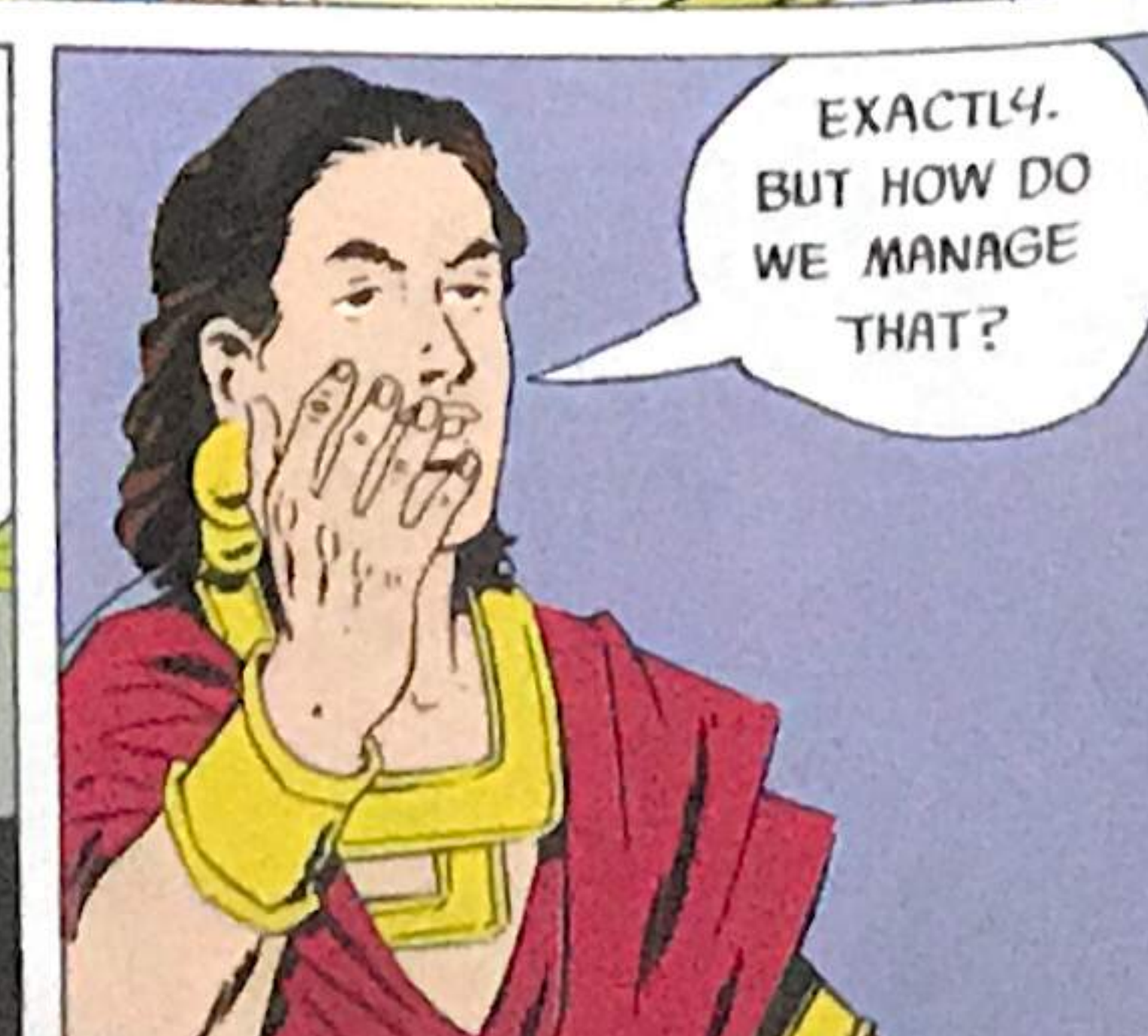


BUT MENTAL TORTURE DROVE AJATASHATRU TO BE MORE AND MORE VIOLENT AND REVENGEFUL.

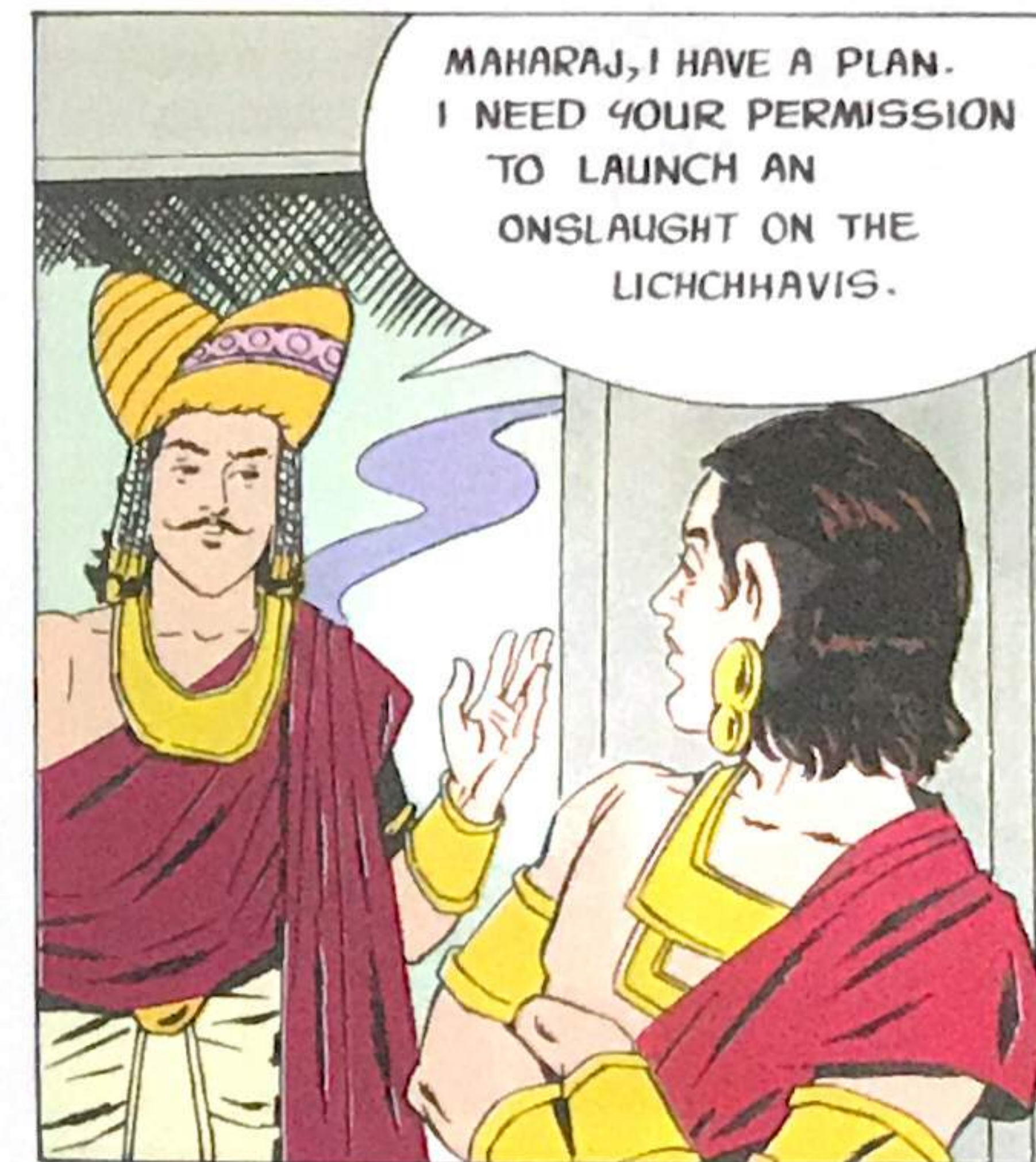
THEY CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.



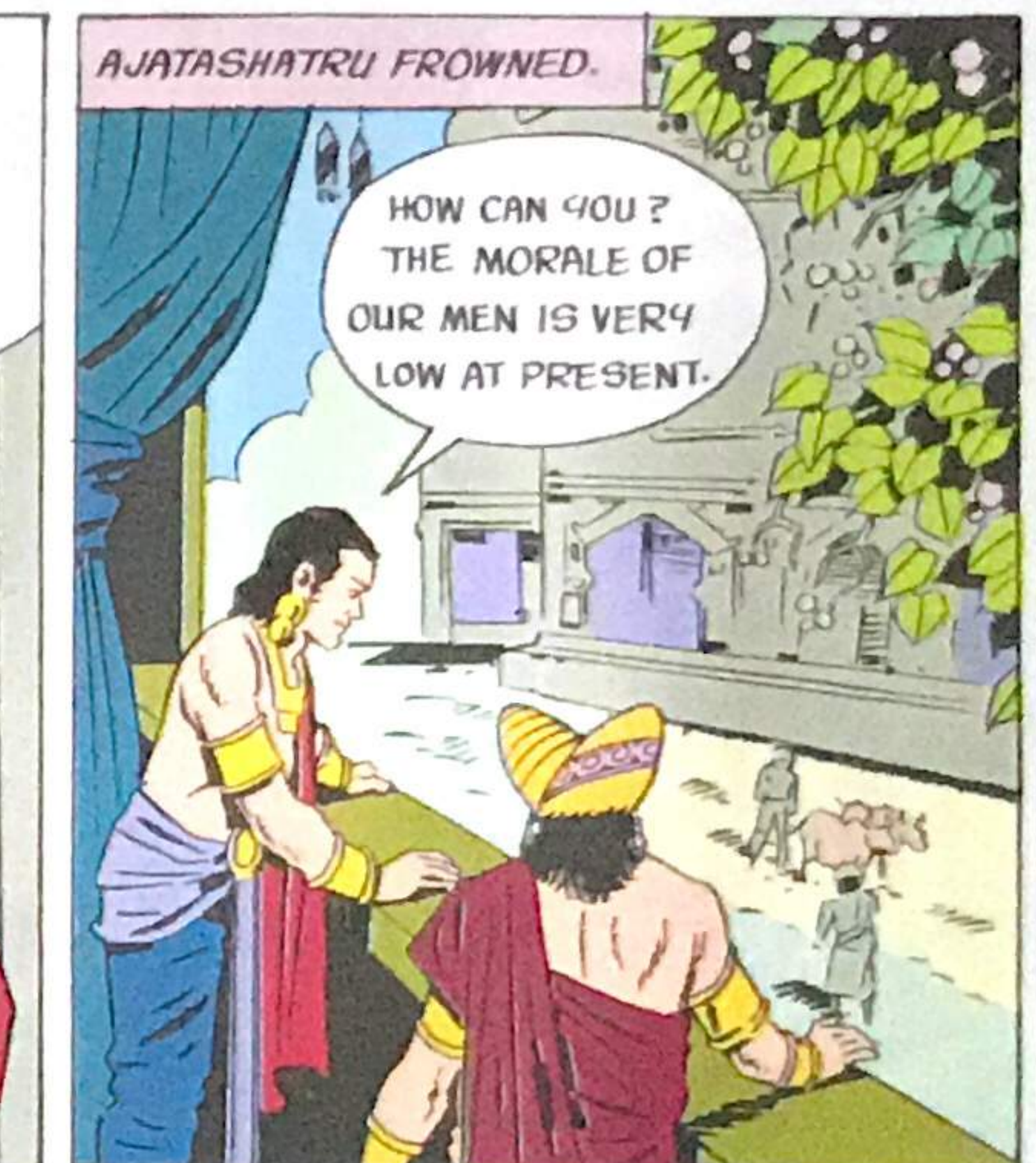
IN THAT CASE WE MUST MAKE A DETERMINED EFFORT TO SUBDUCE THE LICHCHHAVIS ONCE AND FOR ALL.



EXACTLY. BUT HOW DO WE MANAGE THAT?



MAHARAJ, I HAVE A PLAN. I NEED YOUR PERMISSION TO LAUNCH AN ONSLAUGHT ON THE LICHCHHAVIS.



AJATASHATRU FROWNED.

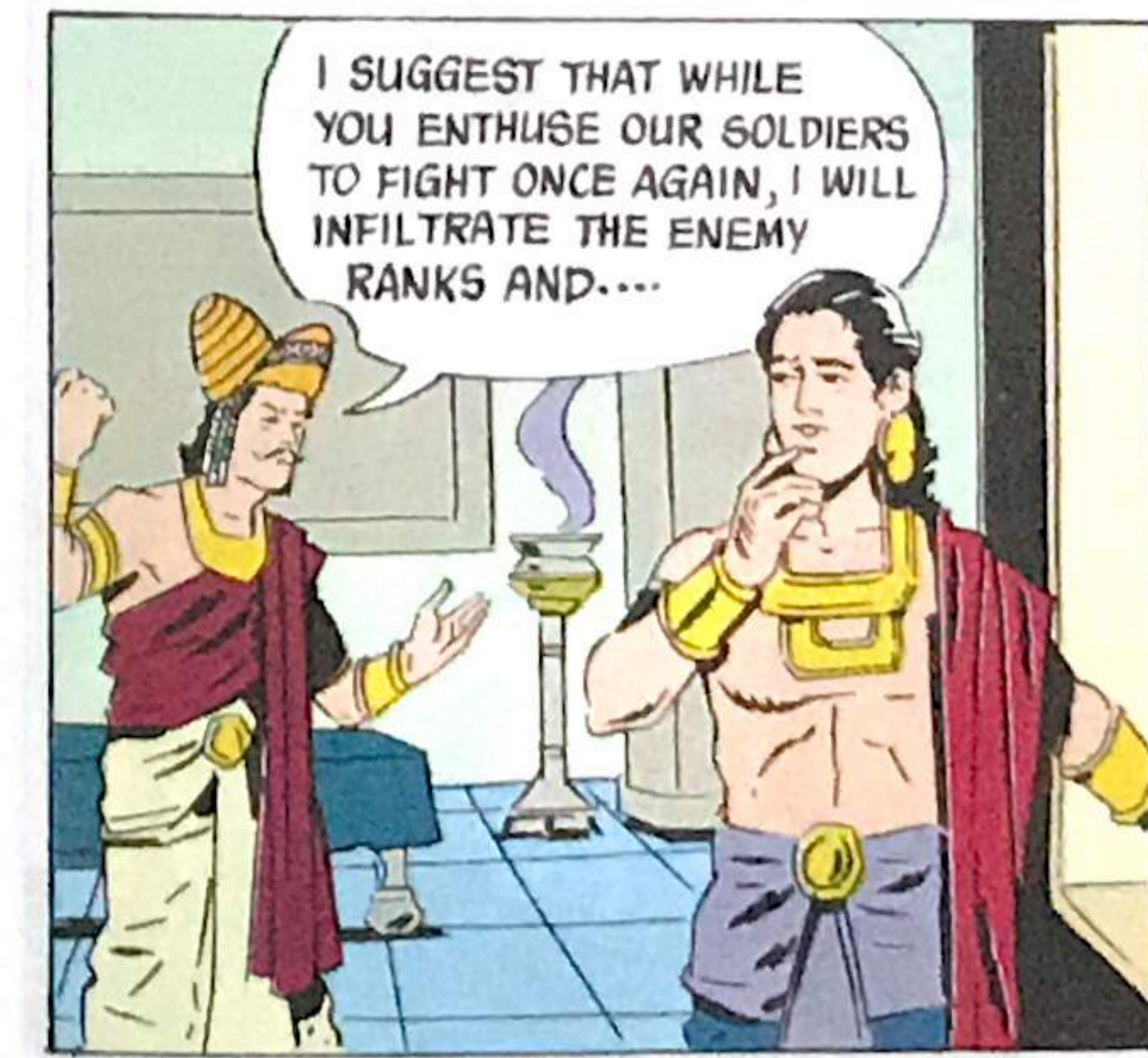
HOW CAN YOU? THE MORALE OF OUR MEN IS VERY LOW AT PRESENT.



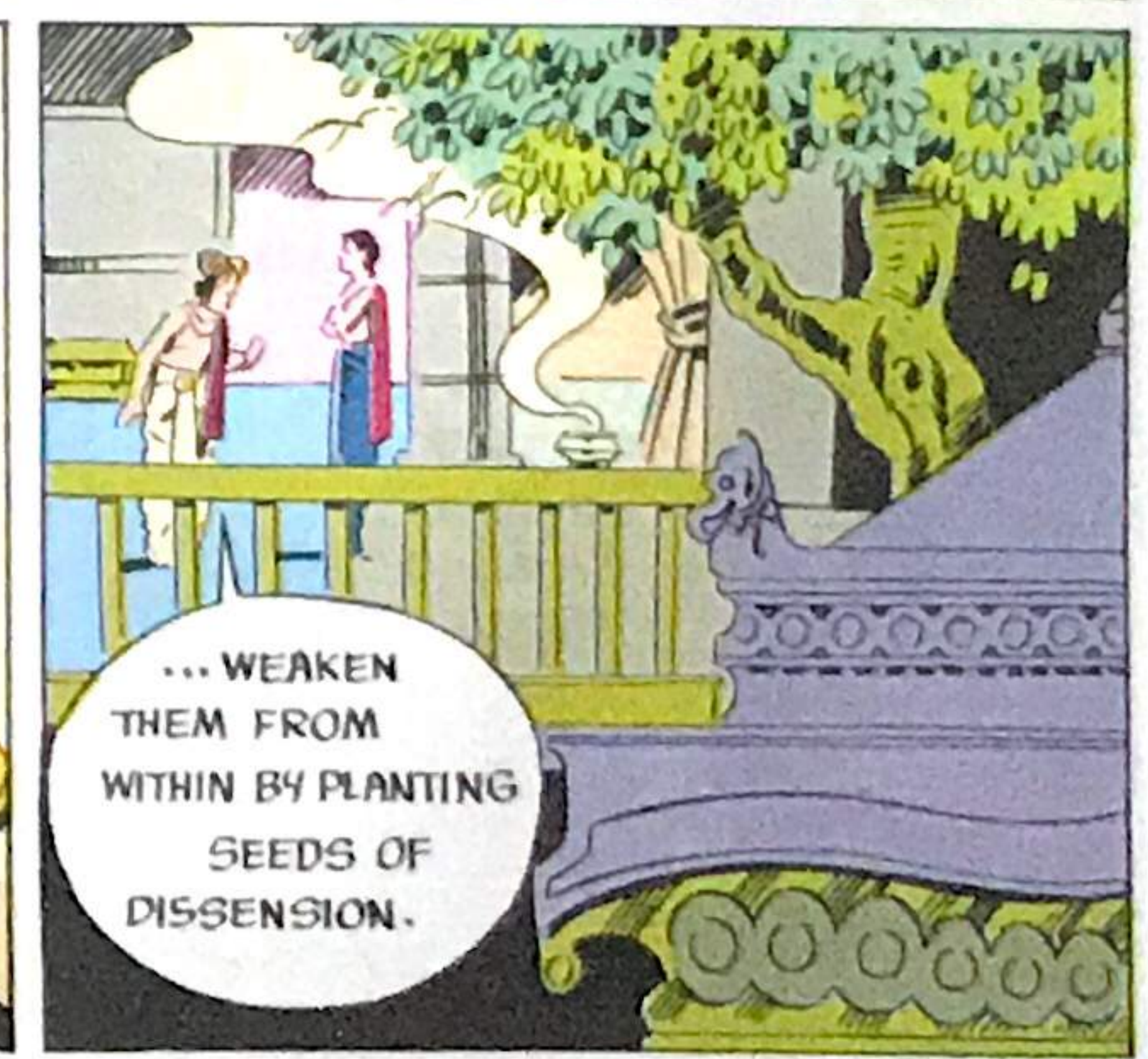
THIS ATTACK NEEDS ONLY ONE MAN, MAHARAJ...



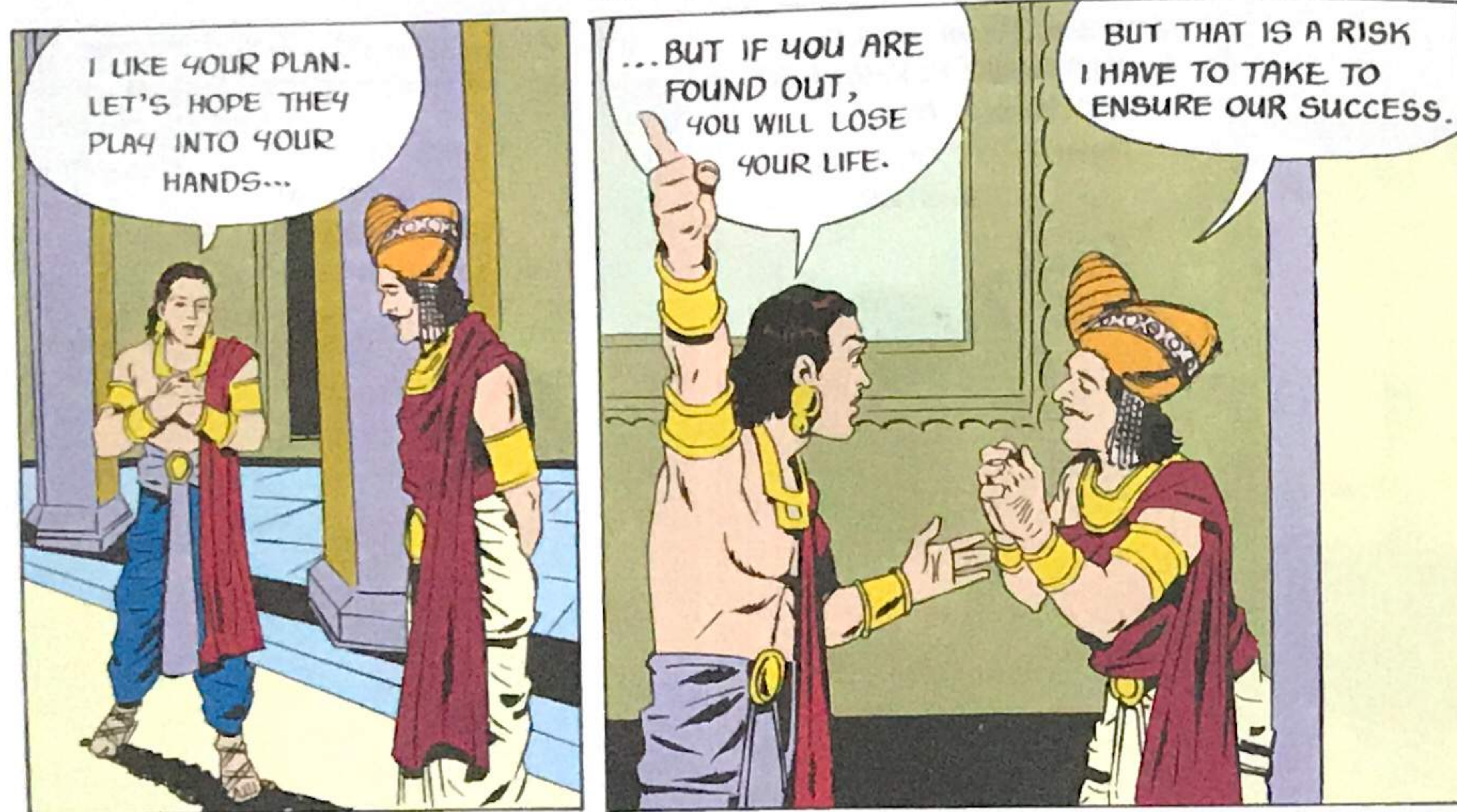
... MYSELF!



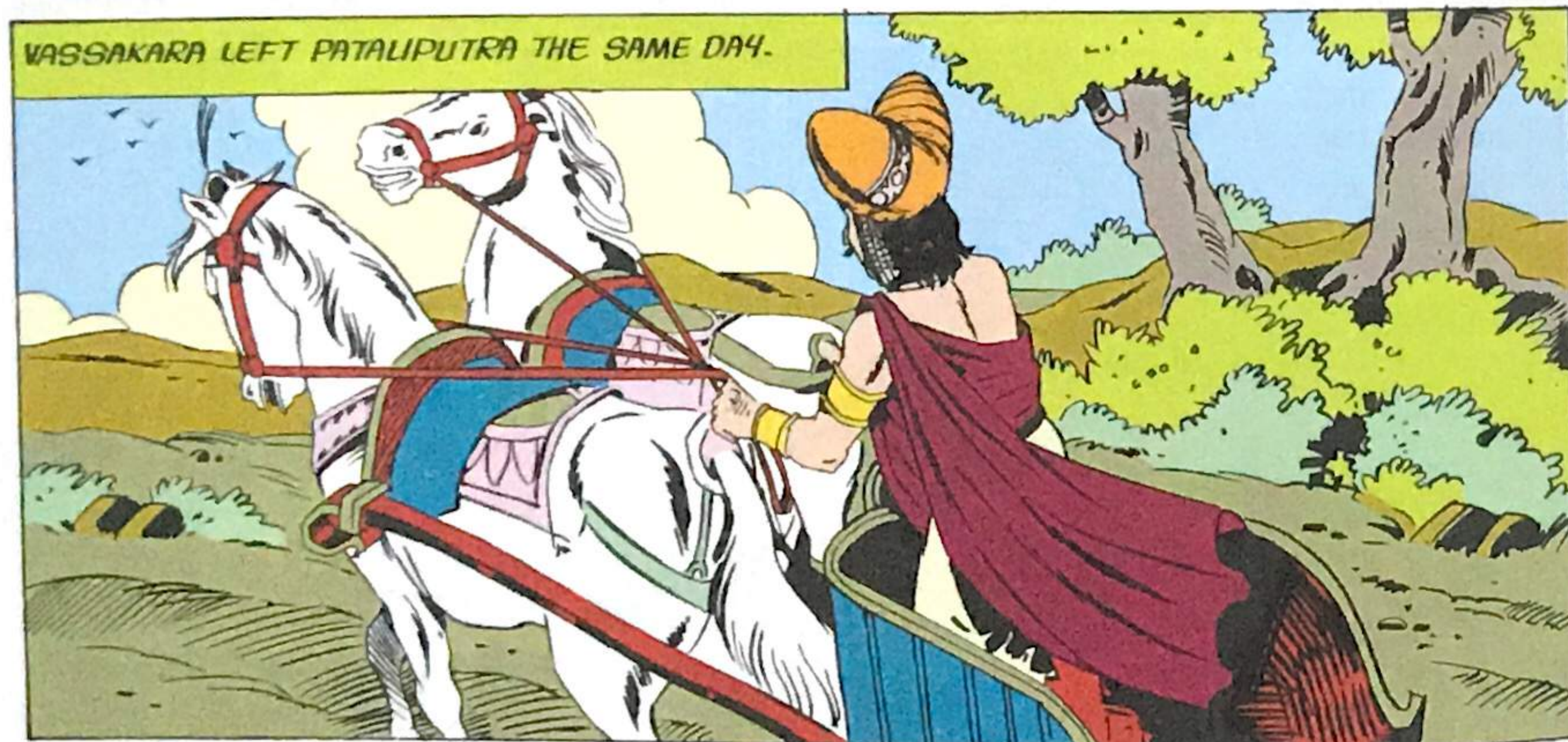
I SUGGEST THAT WHILE YOU ENTHUSE OUR SOLDIERS TO FIGHT ONCE AGAIN, I WILL INFILTRATE THE ENEMY RANKS AND....



... WEAKEN THEM FROM WITHIN BY PLANTING SEEDS OF DISSENSION.



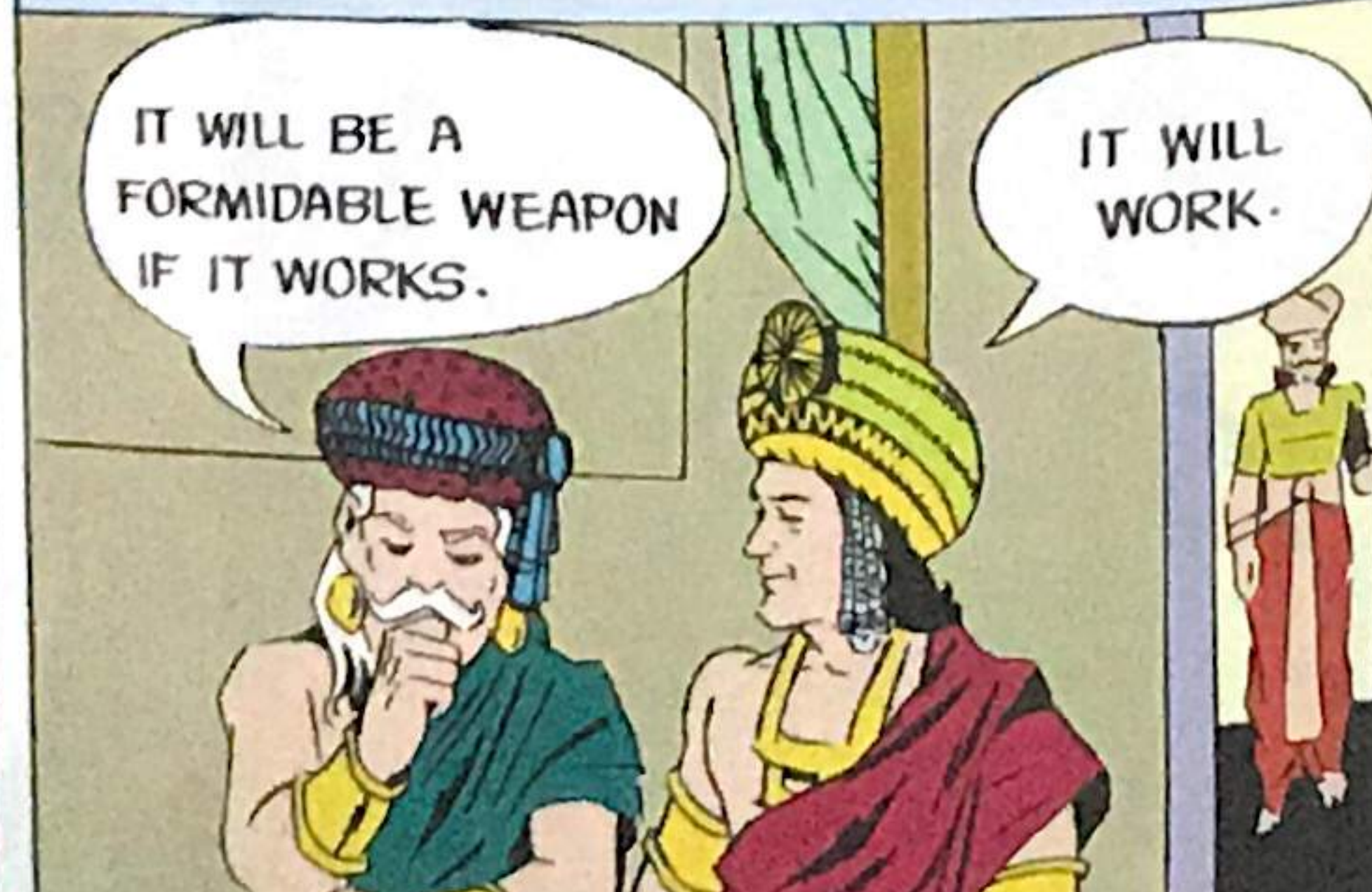
VASSAKARA LEFT PATALIPUTRA THE SAME DAY.



AJATASHATRU SENT FOR HIS ENGINEER.



WHEN AJATASHATRU EXPLAINED HIS PLAN —



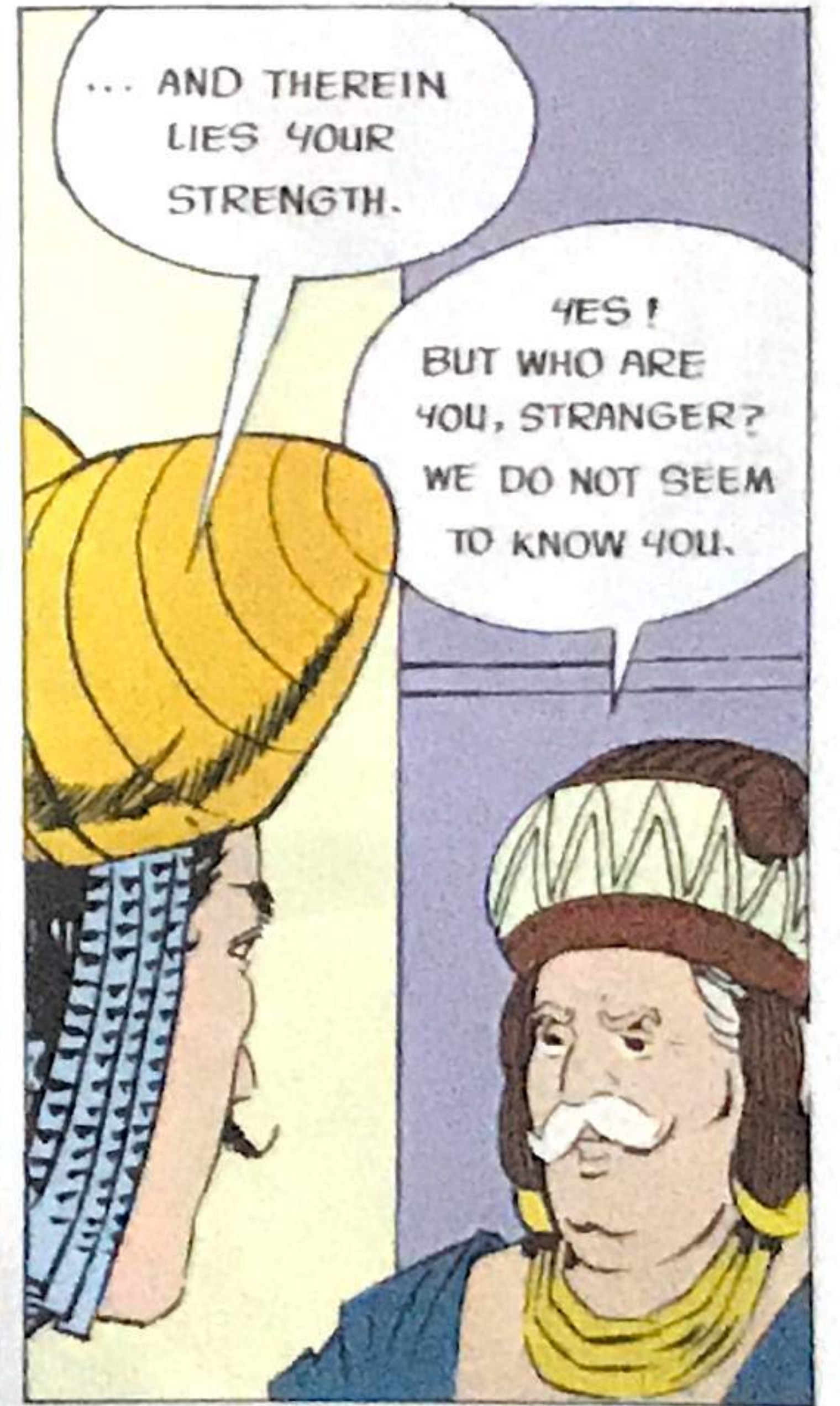
MEANWHILE LICHCHHAVI NOBLES WERE CELEBRATING THEIR VICTORY OVER AJATASHATRU.

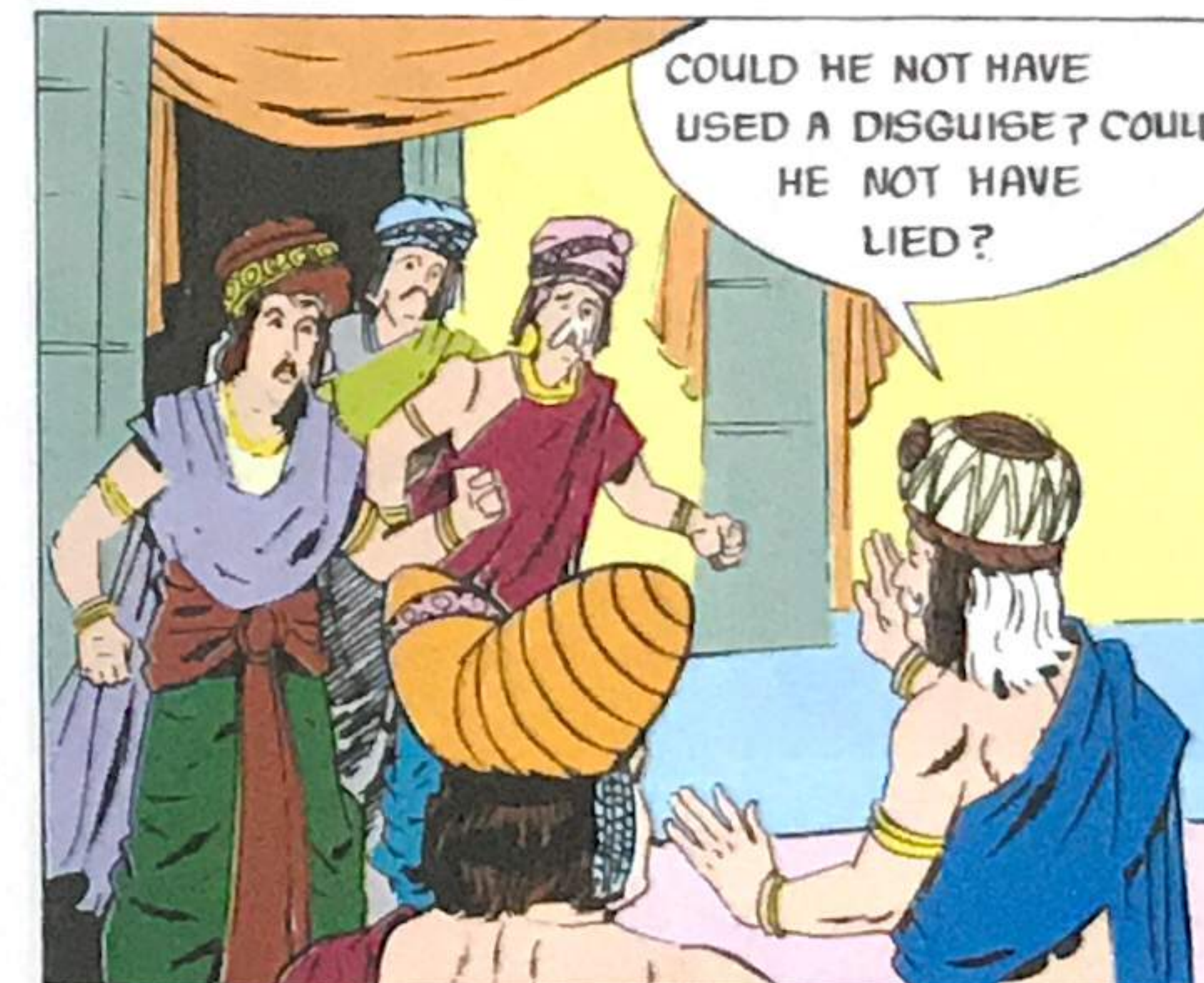
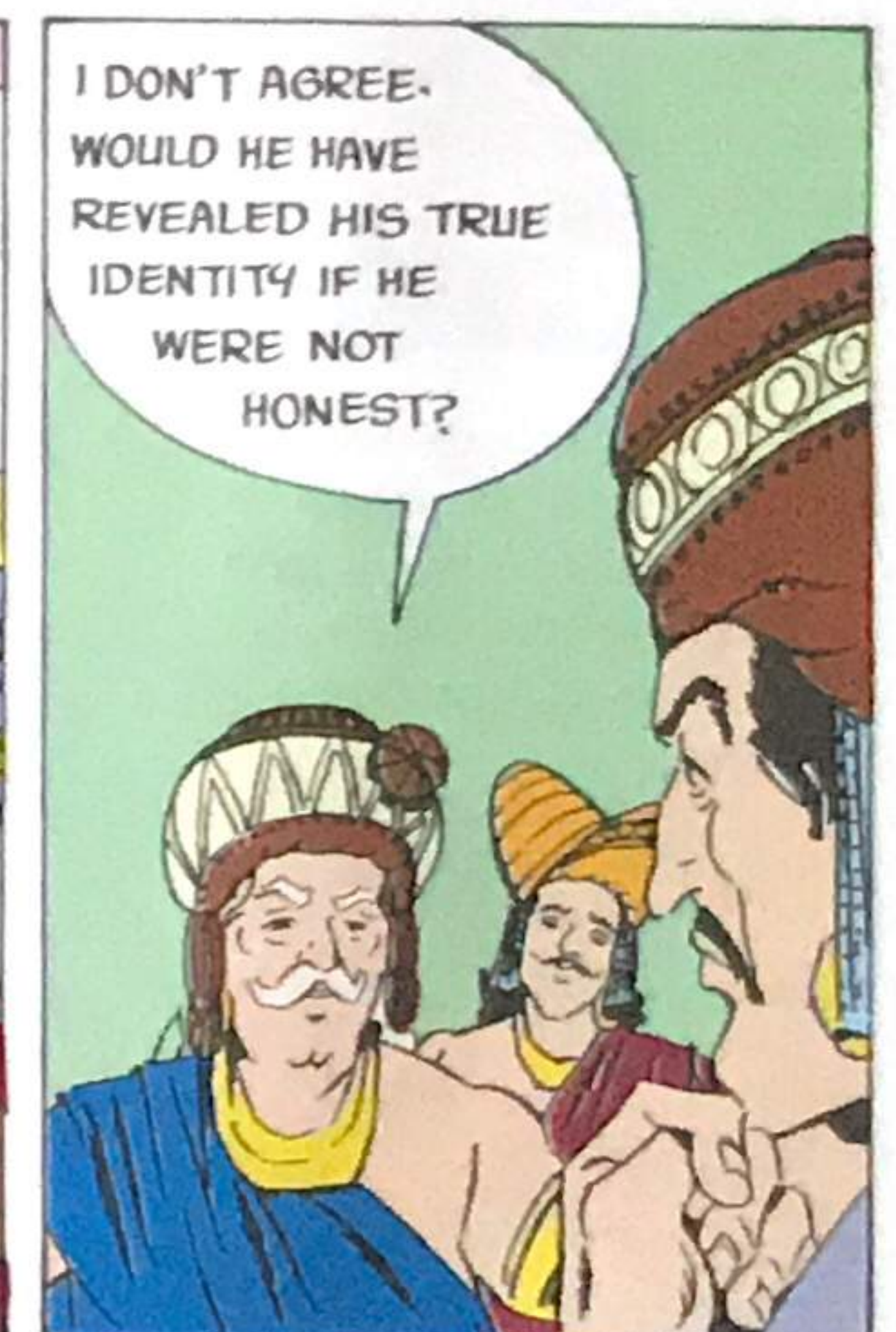
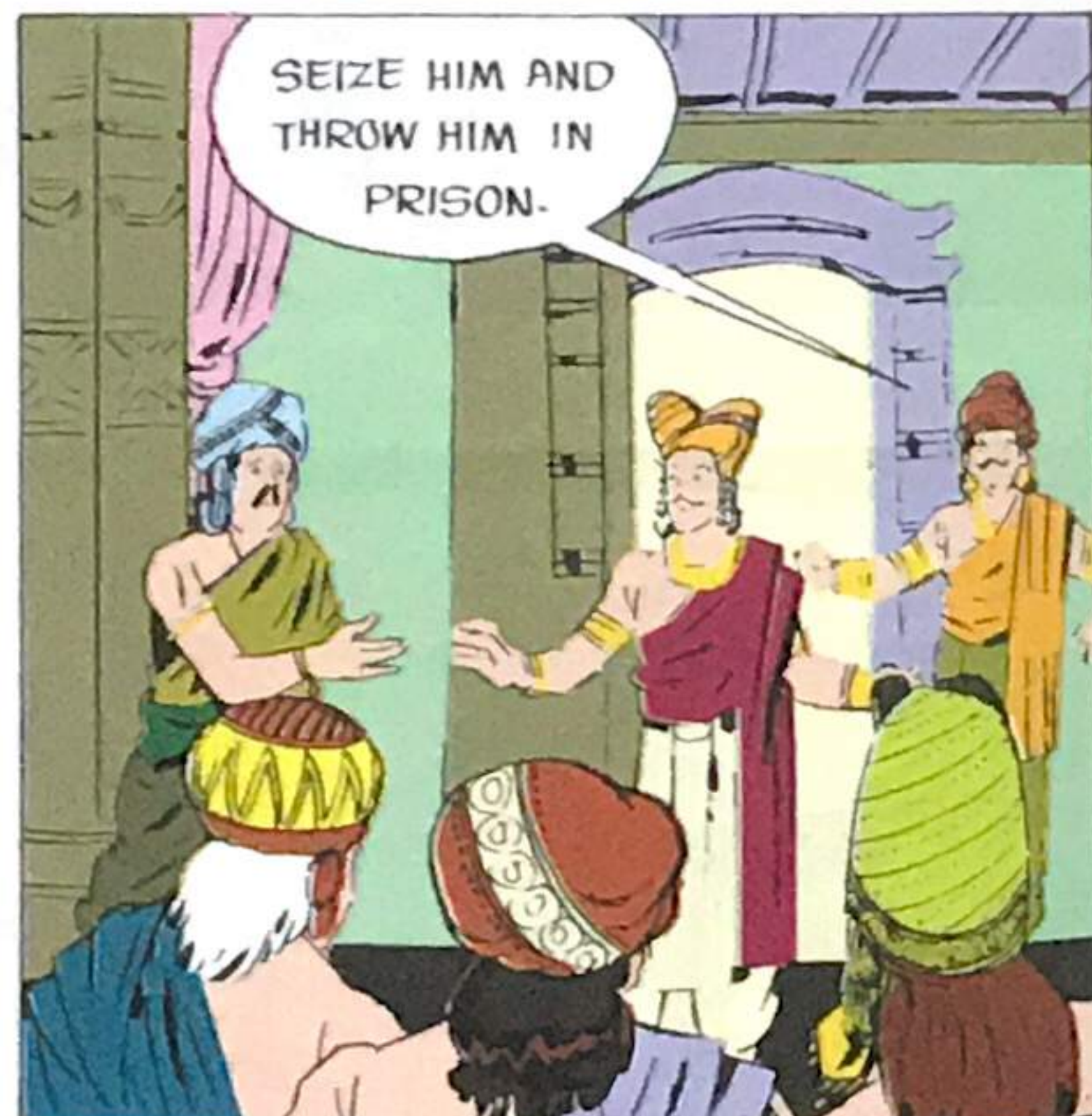


ESPECIALLY THOSE MEN WHO ARE UNITED AND TAKE COLLECTIVE DECISIONS.



EVERYONE TURNED TO THE MAN WHO HAD JUST SPOKEN.





GRADUALLY, VASSAKARA STARTED WORKING SUBTLY ON THE NOBLES WHO OFTEN VOICED DISSENT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE.



YES, IT IS RATHER ODD.

IS IT BECAUSE YOU DO NOT BELONG TO THE AFFLUENT GROUP, WHILE MOST OF THE OTHER NOBLES DO!

MAY BE.



VASSAKARA MANAGED TO PLANT THE SEED OF DOUBT IN THE MIND OF HIS HOST...

... AND WITHIN A FEW YEARS VASSAKARA SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING ABOUT A RIFT BETWEEN THE LICHCHHAVIS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES.



A FEW WEEKS LATER—



WHILE THE ENEMY WAS ADVANCING, THE LICHCHHAVIS WERE BICKERING AMONG THEMSELVES.



FINALLY, AT VAISHALI, CHETAKA, THE CHIEF OF THE LICHCHHAVIS, MADE A FERVENT APPEAL.

OUR STRENGTH LIES IN OUR UNITY. QUARREL AMONG US AND MUTUAL MISTRUST COULD HELP AJATASHATRU, OUR ONLY ENEMY.

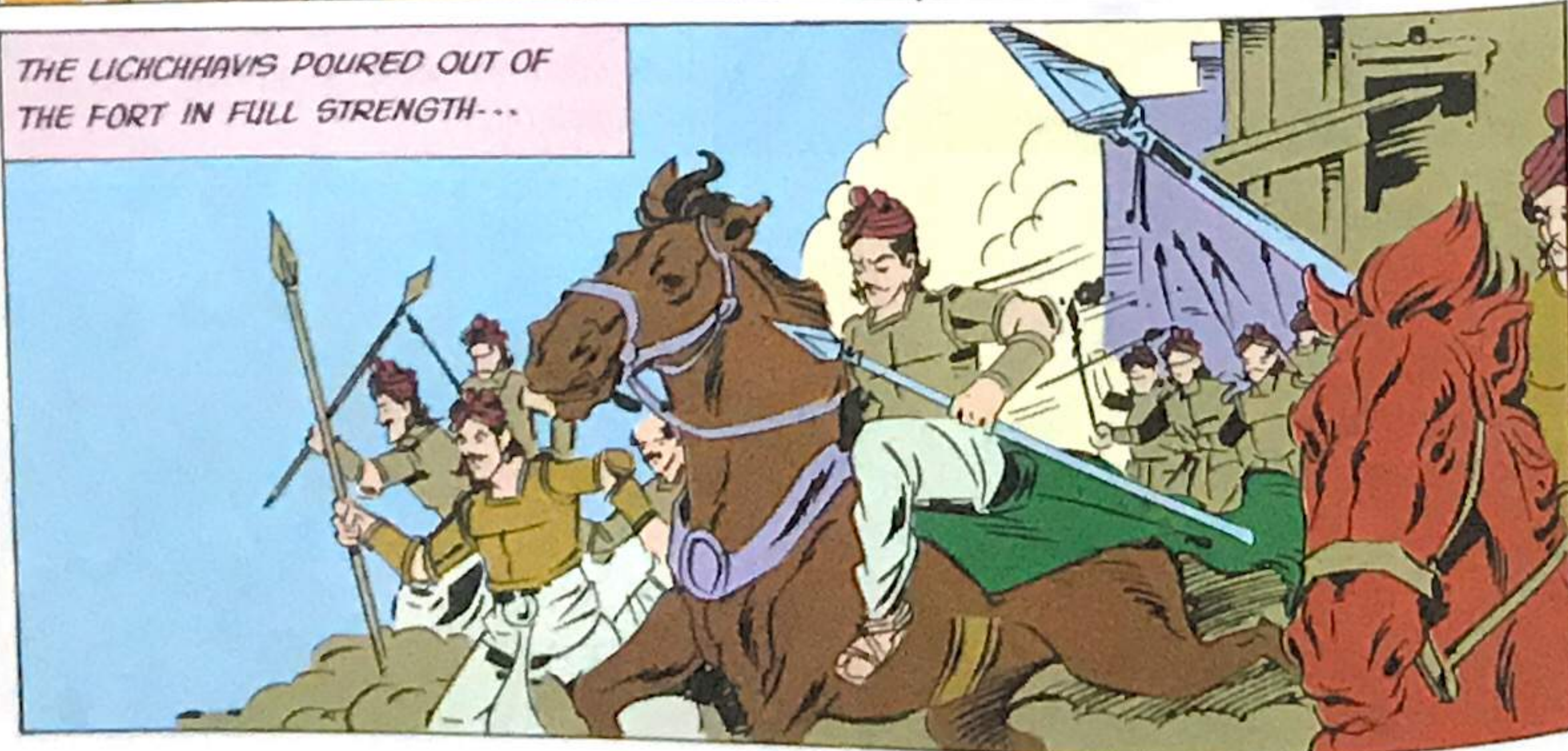
LET US DECIDE WHETHER WE WANT TO FIGHT ONE ANOTHER OR THE ENEMY.

CHETAKA'S APPEAL HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT—

WE WILL FIGHT AJATASHATRU.

WE ARE WITH YOU, CHETAKA.

THE LICHCHHAVIS POURED OUT OF THE FORT IN FULL STRENGTH—



... AND FOUGHT SPIRITEDLY.



VASSAKARA WHO HAD MEANWHILE REJOINED HIS KING LOOKED MISERABLE.

ALL MY EFFORTS SEEM TO HAVE FAILED, MAHARAJ.

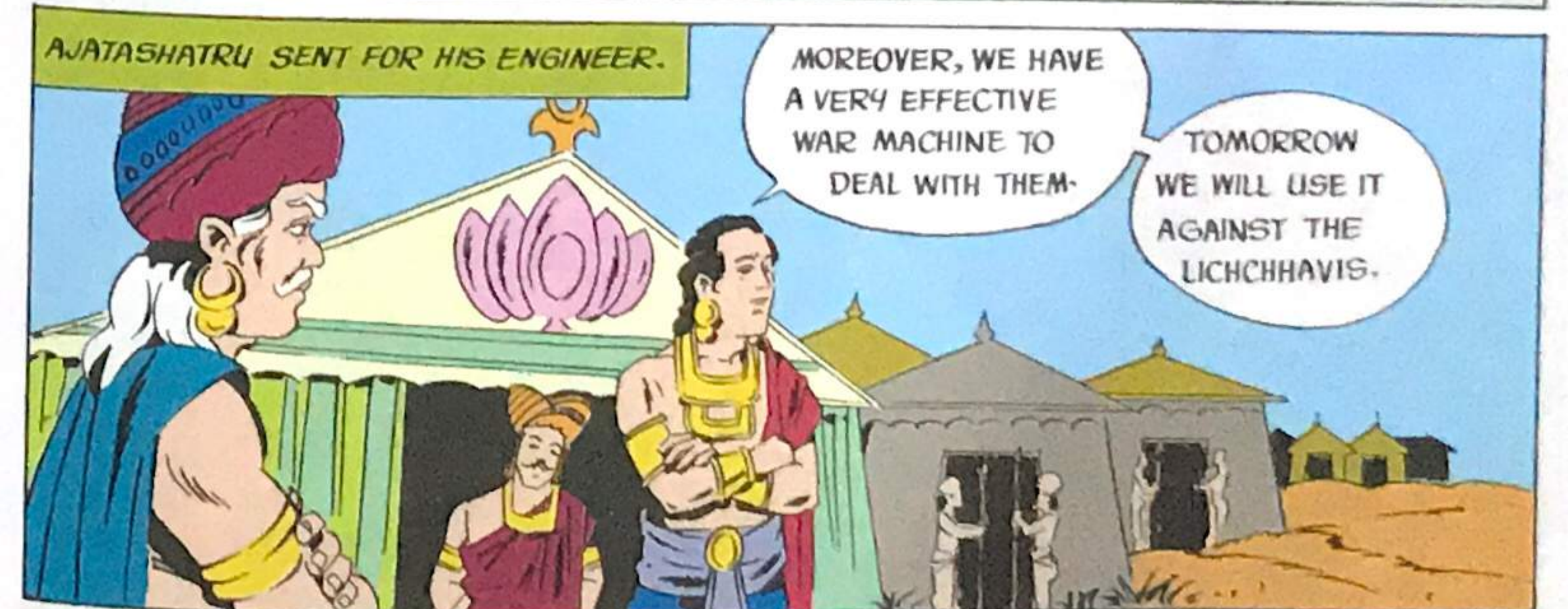


HAVE PATIENCE, VASSAKARA. THIS IS NOT REAL UNITY BUT ONLY A WEAK PATCH-UP.

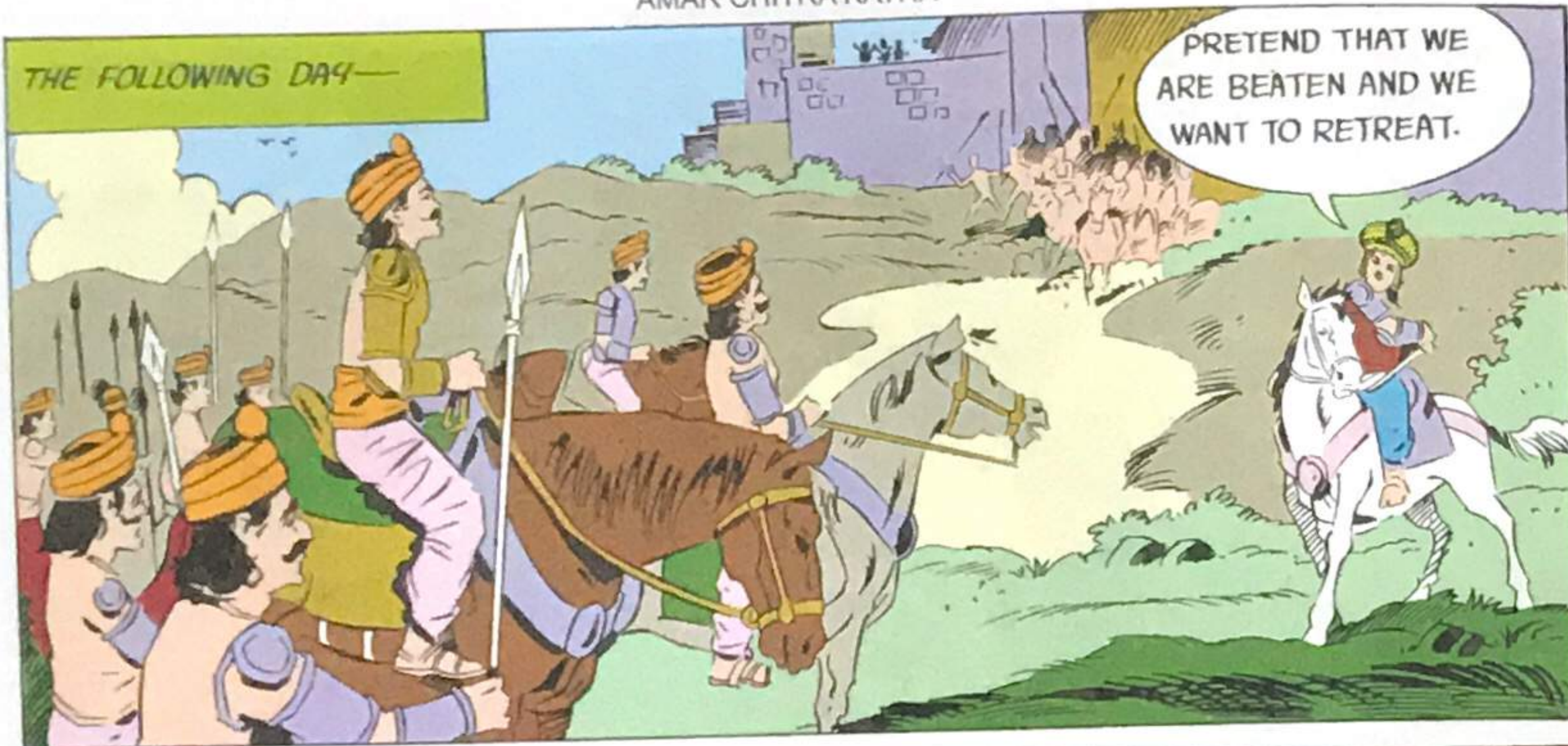
AJATASHATRU SENT FOR HIS ENGINEER.

MOREOVER, WE HAVE A VERY EFFECTIVE WAR MACHINE TO DEAL WITH THEM.

TOMORROW WE WILL USE IT AGAINST THE LICHCHHAVIS.



THE FOLLOWING DAY—



AS THE MAGADHAN ARMY BEGAN TO RETREAT—



THE LICHCHHAVIS CHASED THE MAGADHANS RIGHT UP TO THEIR CAMP.



THEN A STRANGE WAR MACHINE EMERGED FROM THE MAGADHAN CAMP.

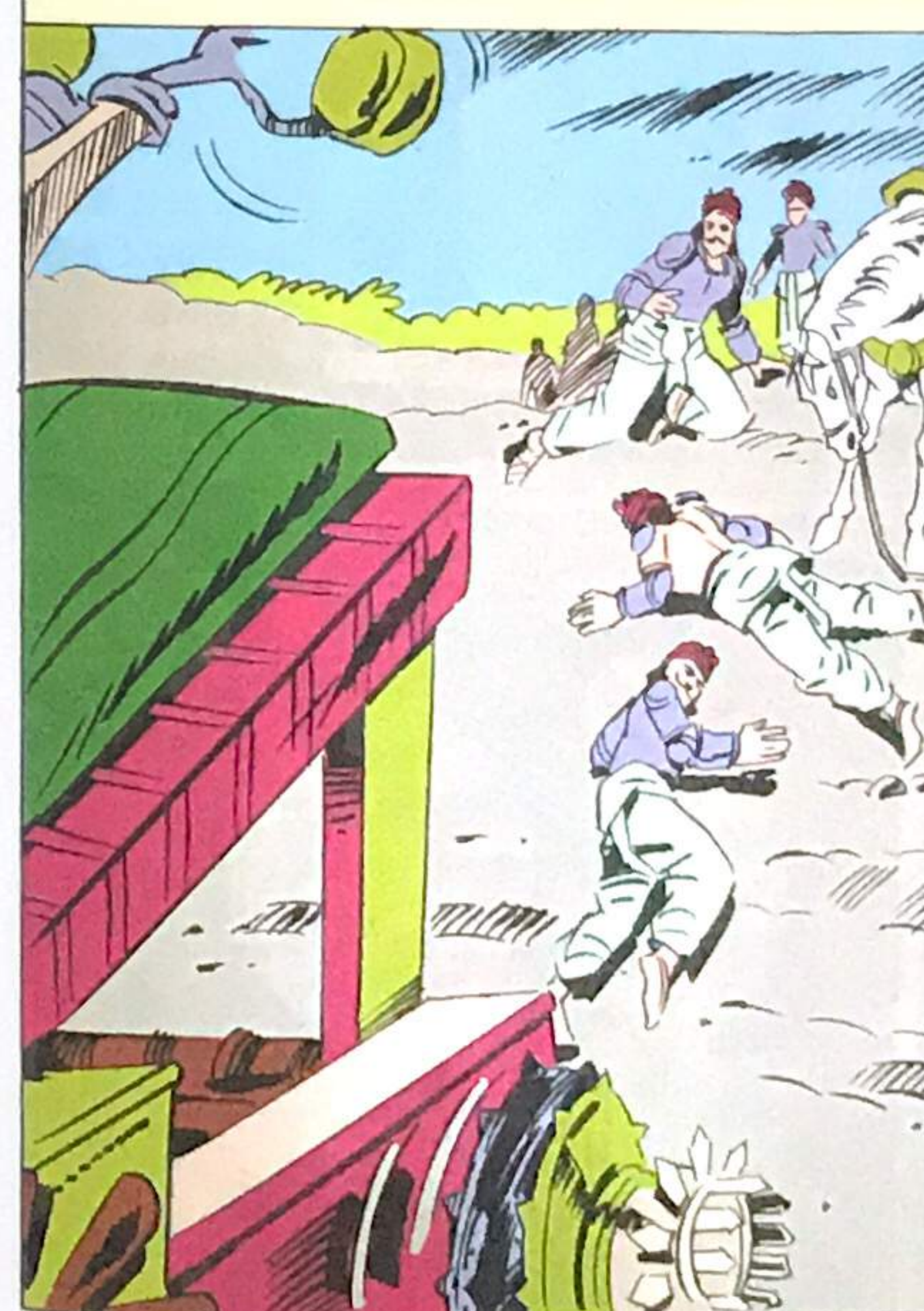


THEY DID NOT REALISE THAT SOLDIERS WERE SITTING INSIDE THE WAR MACHINE, TURNING A WHEEL.

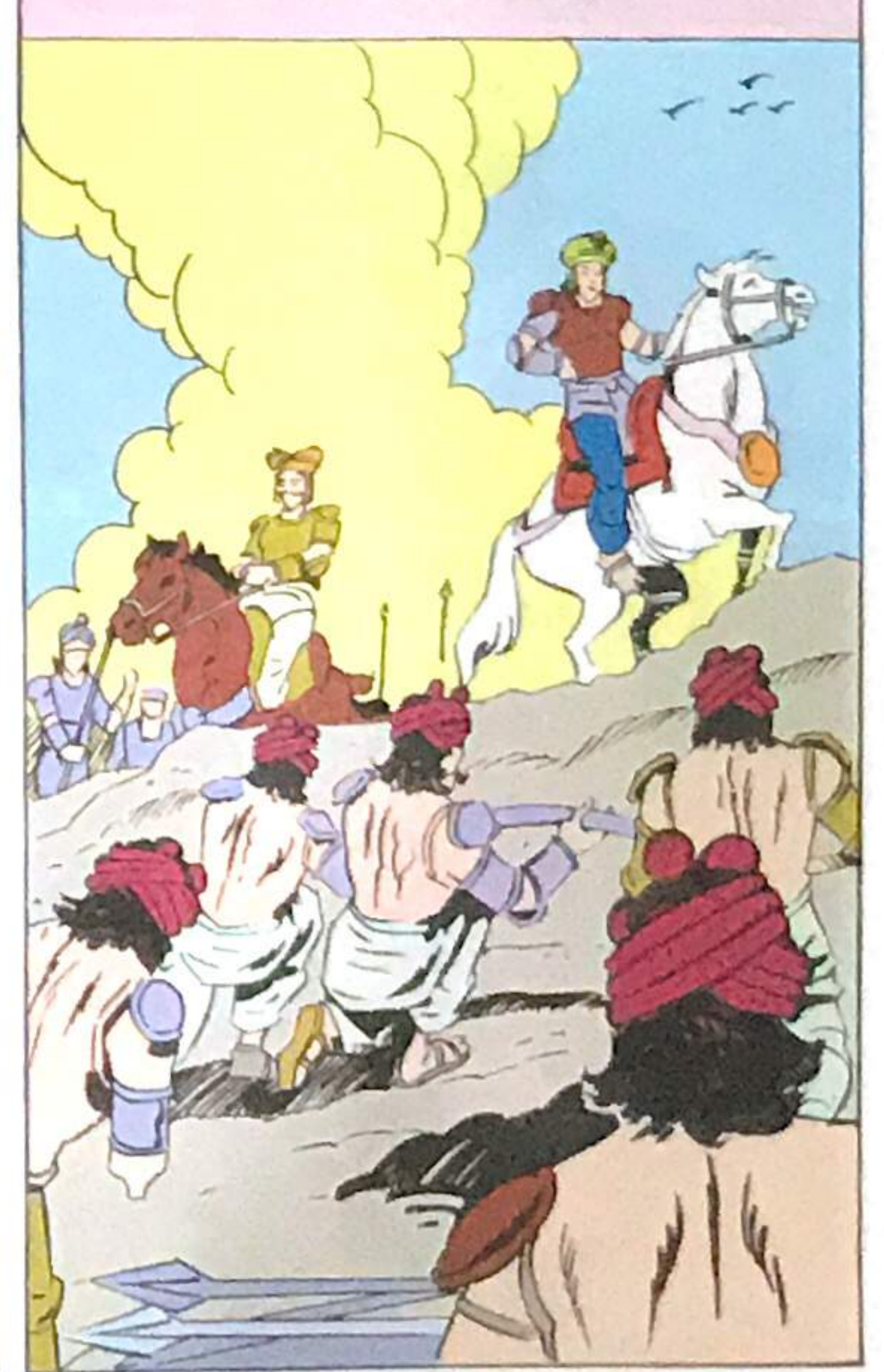
THE STRANGE WAR MACHINE MOVED FAST IN CIRCLES DESTROYING MEN WITH ITS HEAVY RODS.



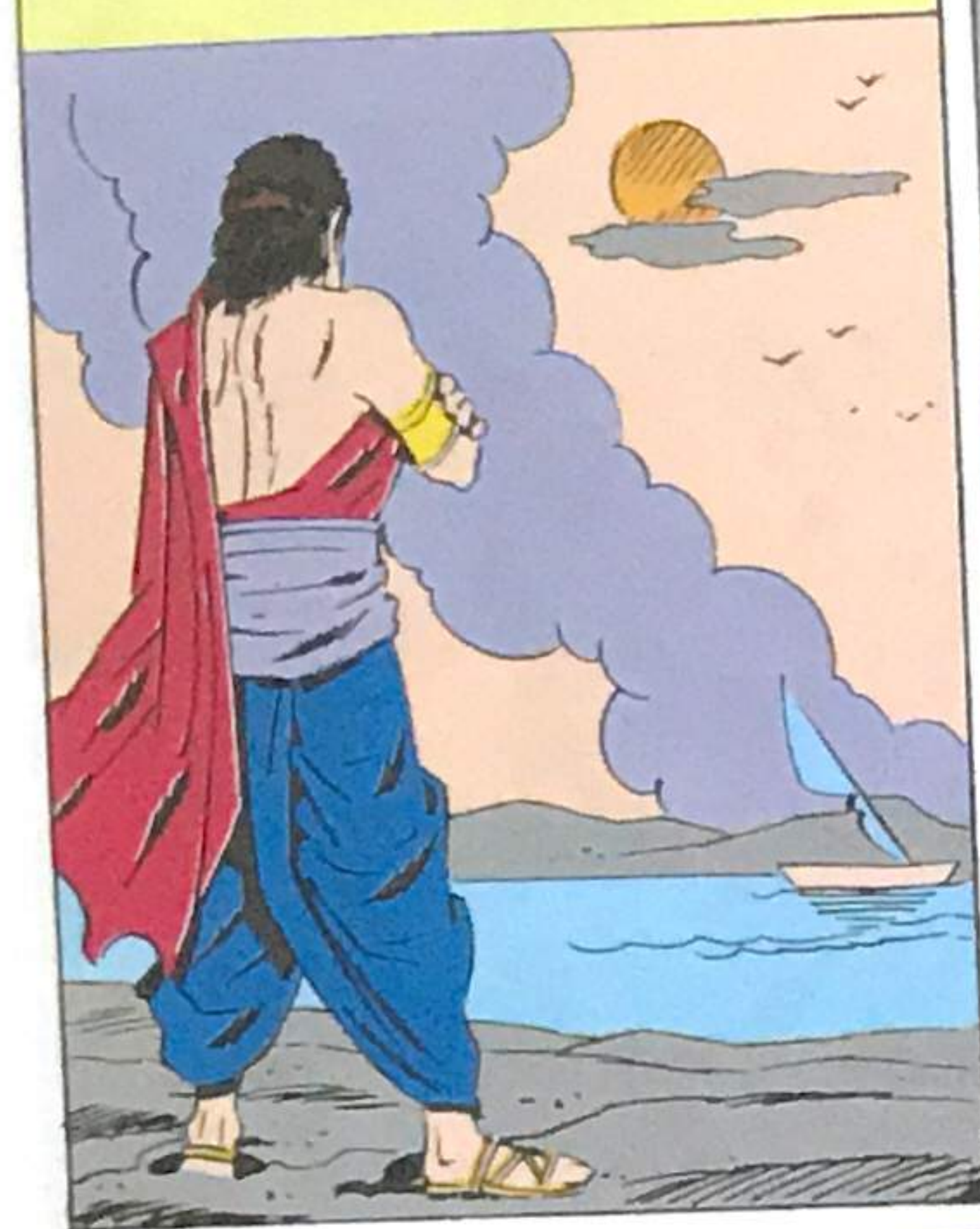
THE LICHCHHAVIS LOST THEIR WILL TO FIGHT...



... AND MEETLY SURRENDERED.



THE DECISIVE VICTORY AGAINST THE LICHCHHAVIS CONCLUDED THE LONG-DRAWN CAMPAIGN. AJATASHATRU BEGAN TO FEEL RESTLESS ONCE AGAIN.

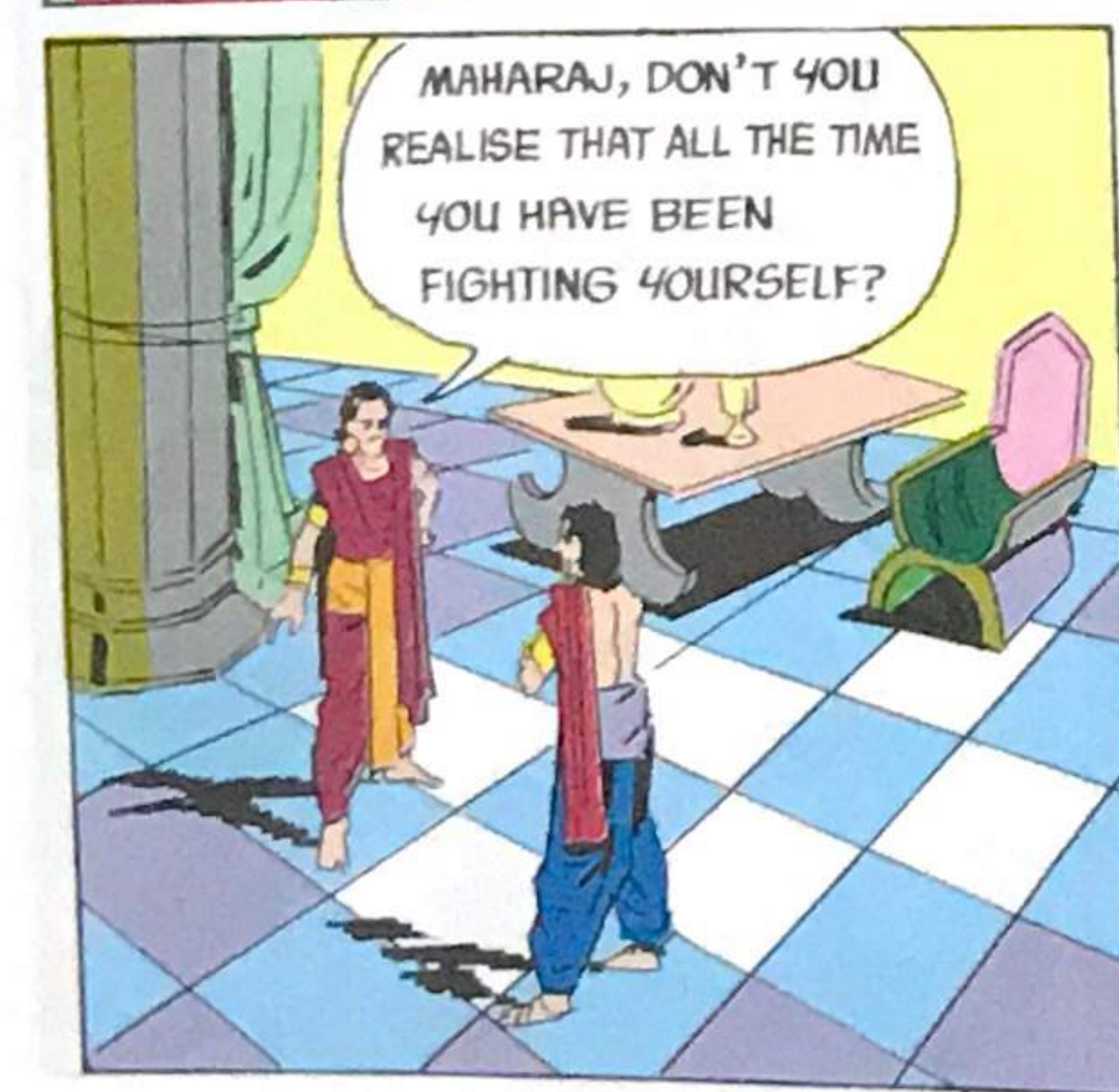


HE TURNED TO HIS PERSONAL PHYSICIAN AND FRIEND JEEVAKA FOR ADVICE.

I GET INTO A FIT OF DEPRESSION AT THE CONCLUSION OF EVERY CAMPAIGN.



I FEEL ALL RIGHT AS LONG AS I HAVE SOMEONE TO FIGHT WITH.

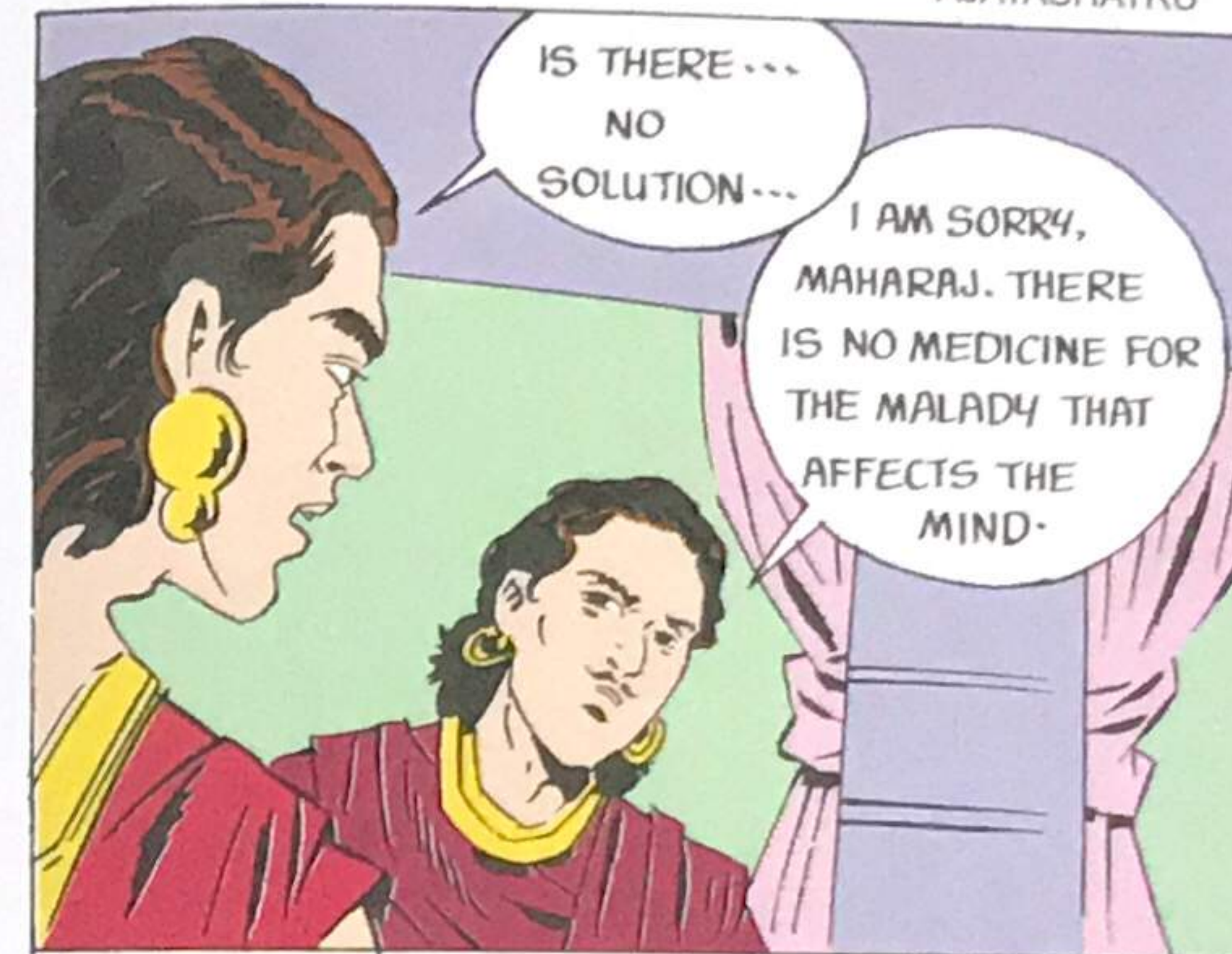


MAHARAJ, DON'T YOU REALISE THAT ALL THE TIME YOU HAVE BEEN FIGHTING YOURSELF?



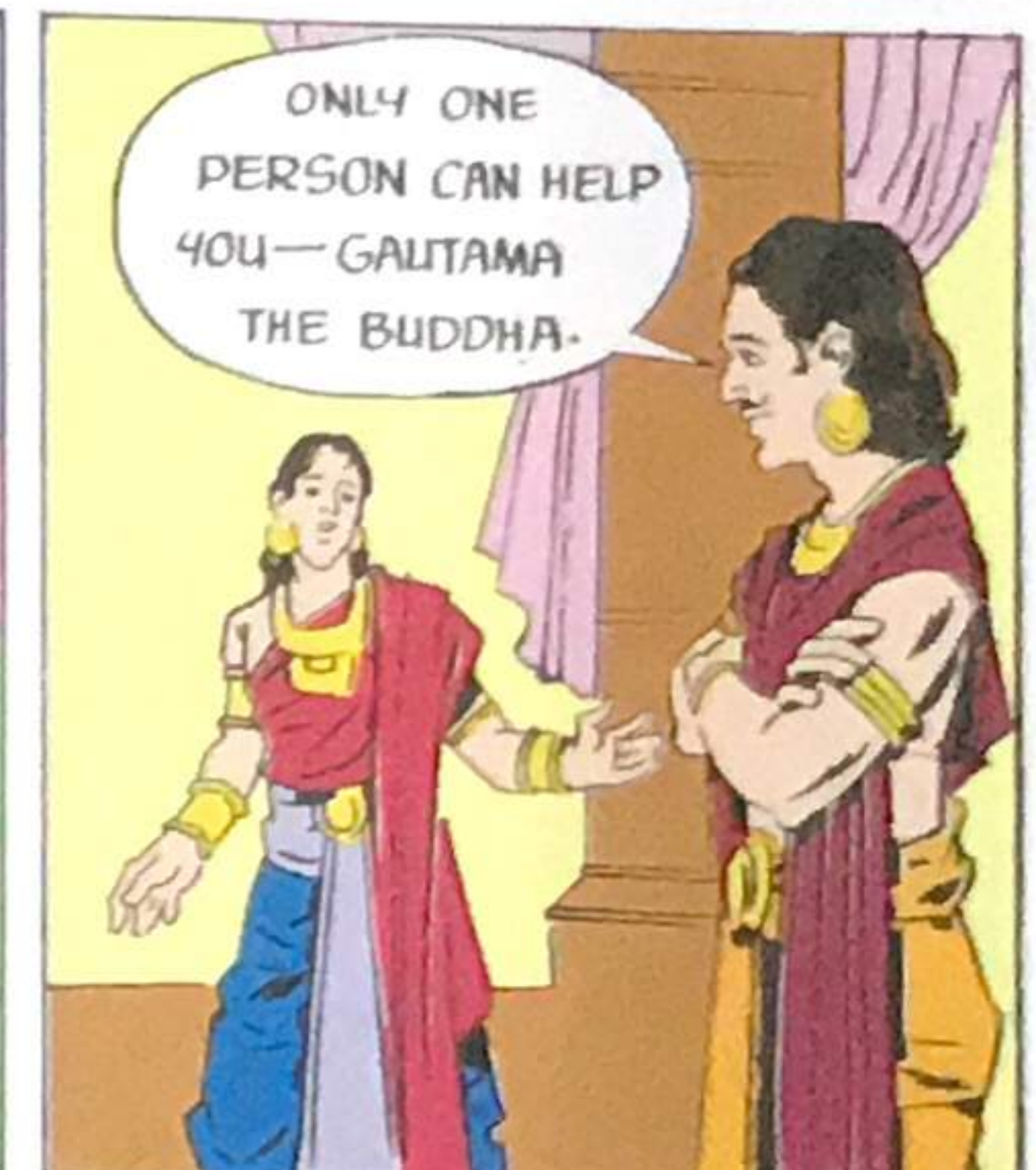
AJATASHATRU RECALLED PRASENAJIT'S WORDS.

SEEK PEACE, NOT WAR. SEEK LIFE, NOT DEATH.



IS THERE... NO SOLUTION...

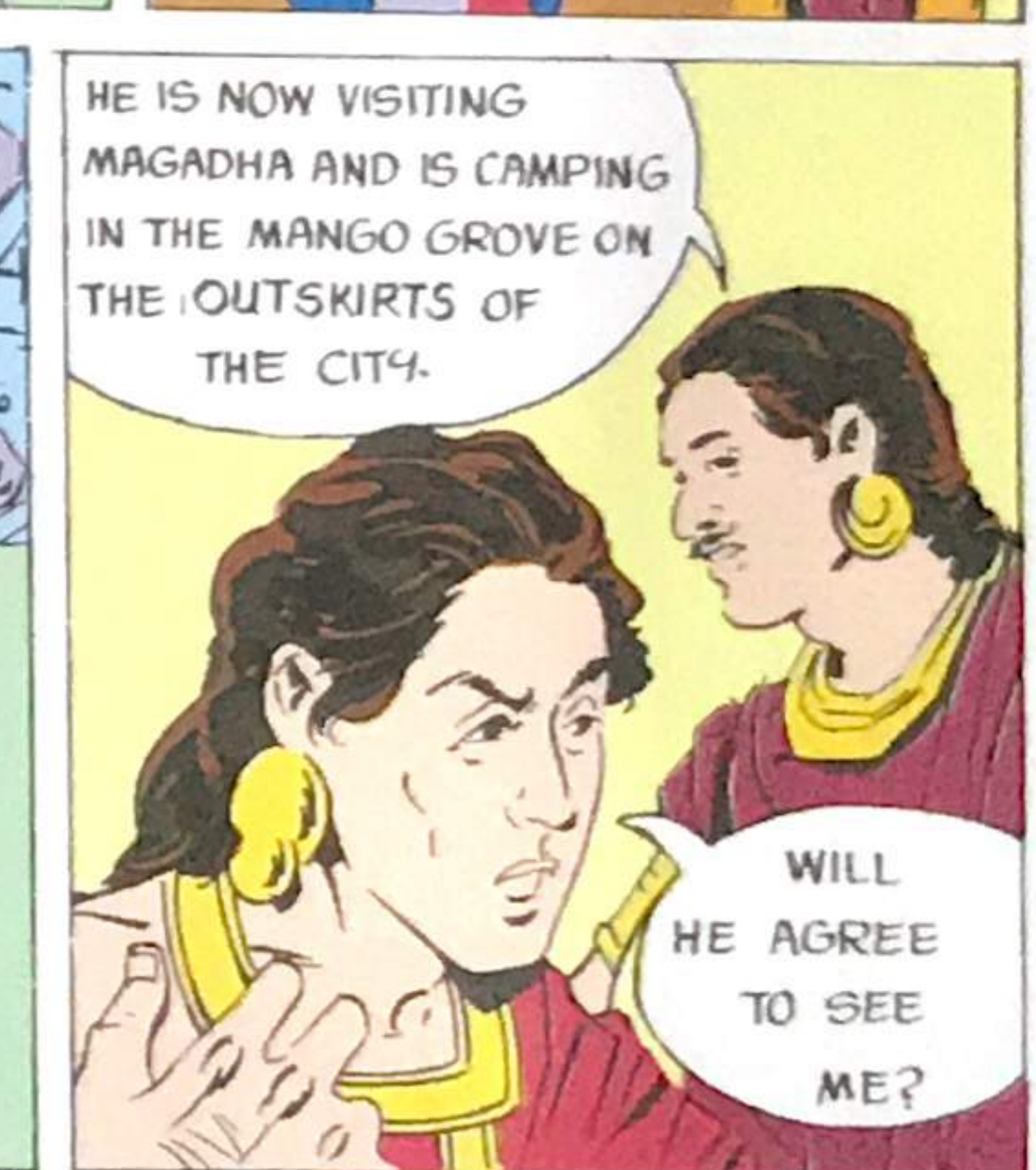
I AM SORRY, MAHARAJ. THERE IS NO MEDICINE FOR THE MALADY THAT AFFECTS THE MIND.



ONLY ONE PERSON CAN HELP YOU—GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA.

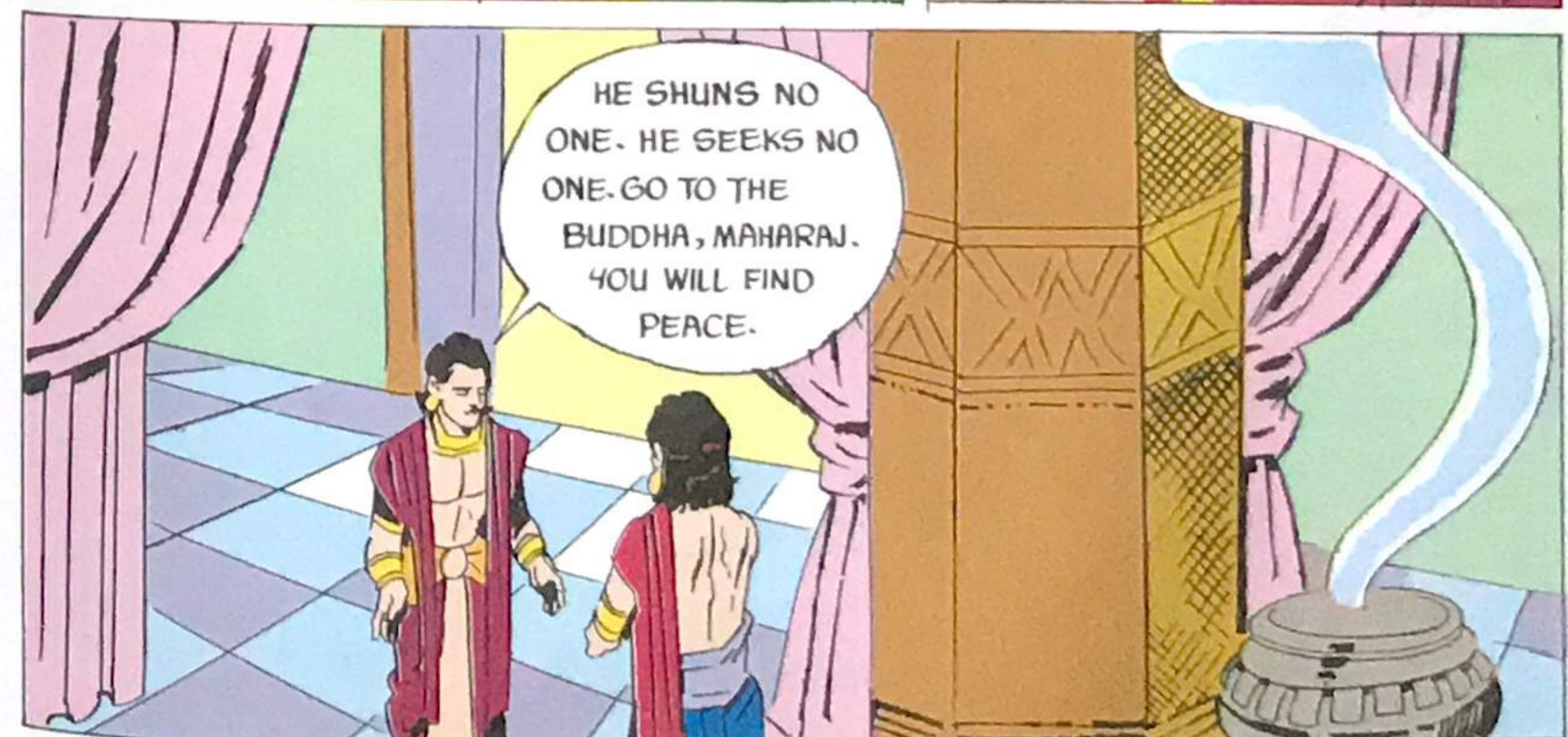


GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA.



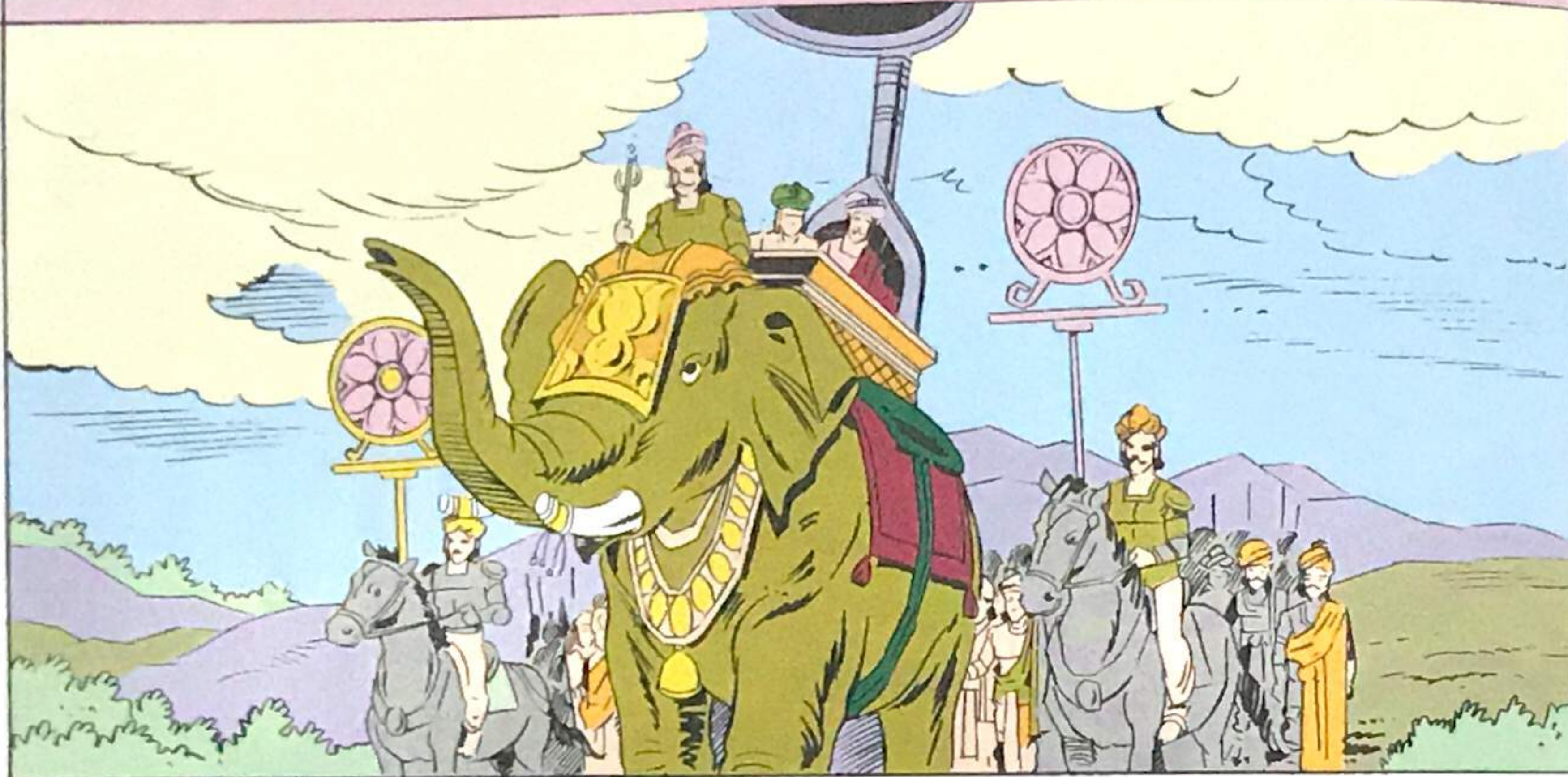
HE IS NOW VISITING MAGADHA AND IS CAMPING IN THE MANGO GROVE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY.

WILL HE AGREE TO SEE ME?



HE SHUNS NO ONE. HE SEEKS NO ONE. GO TO THE BUDDHA, MAHARAJ. YOU WILL FIND PEACE.

ACCOMPANIED BY JEEVAKA, AJATASHATRU SET OUT TO SEEK AN AUDIENCE WITH THE BUDDHA



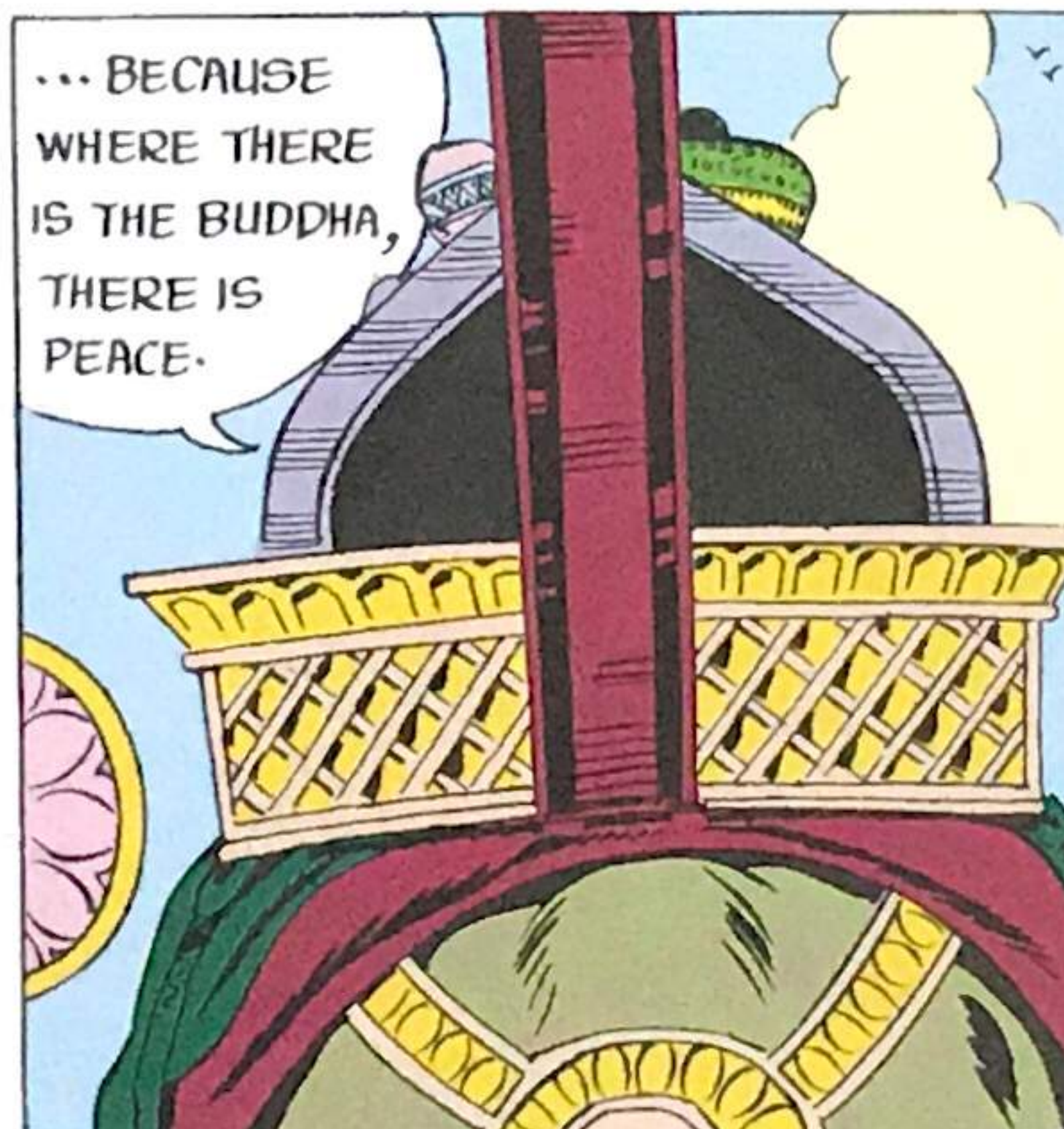
AS THEY ENTERED THE MANGO GROVE, AJATASHATRU WAS SUSPICIOUS!

I HEAR NO VOICE. I SEE NO ONE. I HOPE THIS IS NOT A TRAP, JEEVAKA.

NO, MAHARAJ, I ASSURE YOU...



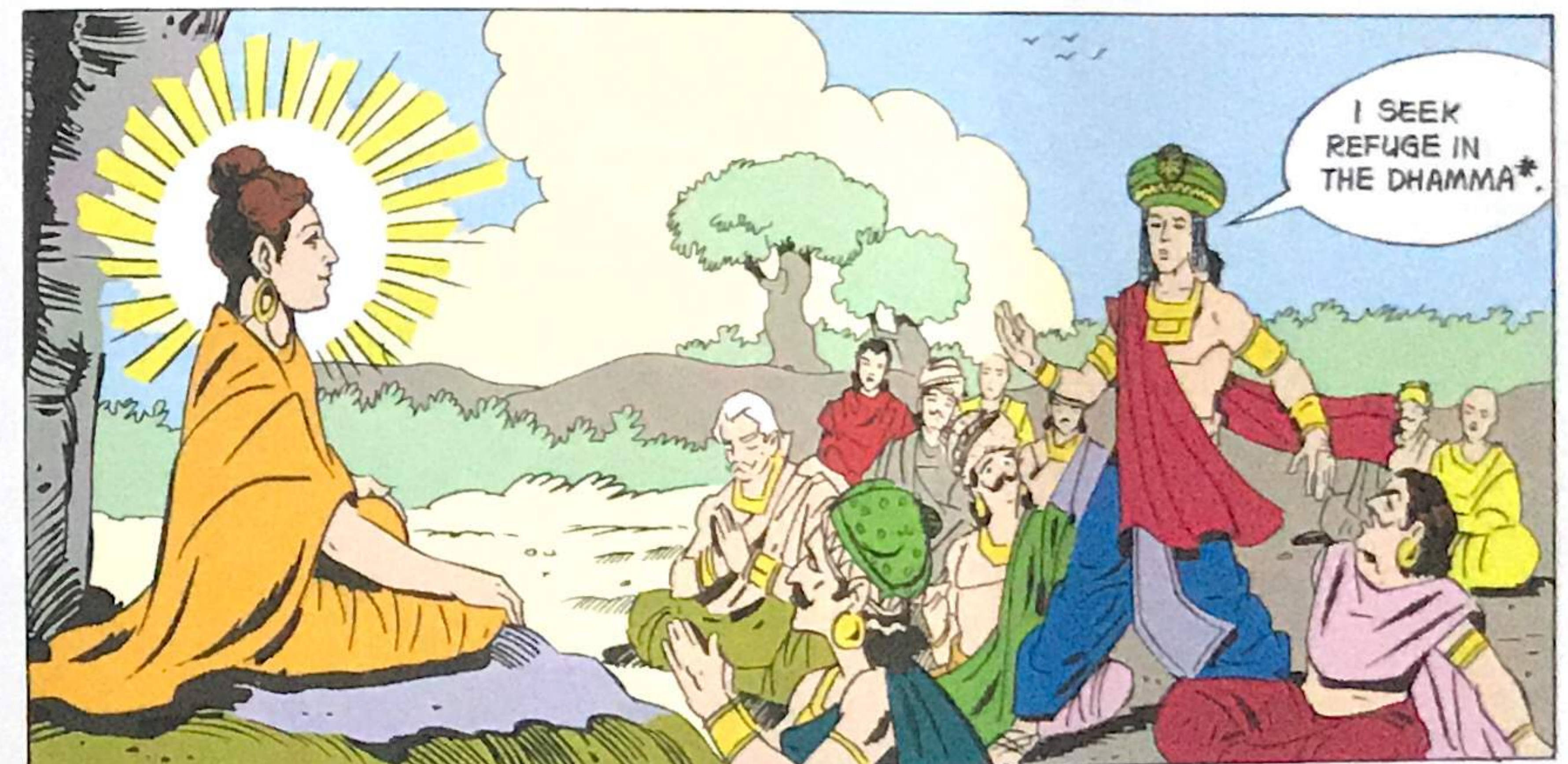
... BECAUSE WHERE THERE IS THE BUDDHA, THERE IS PEACE.



WHEN THEY WERE CLOSE TO THE ASSEMBLY, AJATASHATRU AND JEEVAKA DISMOUNTED AND BEGAN TO WALK.



AS AJATASHATRU APPROACHED THE BUDDHA —



AT LAST AJATASHATRU FOUND PEACE.

